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The Nation. April 19, 1980 $1

EDITORIAL

MAN THE GUNBOATS!

The latest turn of events in Iran should at last have taught the Carter Administration (and its critics as well) a hard lesson—that, as the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations has been saying privately and publicly for months, "the Ayatollah Khomeini does not make deals." We fear, however, given the decision to break diplomatic relations over the failure to consummate a deal, that the lesson has either not been learned or been artfully avoided. Meanwhile, the pressures on the Administration in this campaign season to appear to be doing something "decisive" (read tough) will only increase.

And yet nothing seems clearer than that the Khomeini who "doesn't make deals," is even less likely to respond to coercion. Not even those who condemn the Administration's past restraint really believe that American firepower could either rescue the fifty-three American hostages or, in the words of *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker, "redeem what is left of this nation's reputation." To what purpose, then, the latest American symbolic retaliation—beyond the short-term gains of a political campaign?

The unpleasant truth may be that nothing we can do until the new Parliament is elected in Iran will help the hostages, although we can do much to harm them. And if we are really concerned with national honor, shouldn't the United States Government long ago have told the American people what the Shah did in their name?

It would be ironic if the President moved, under pressure from campaign advisers, to prepare the American people for the use of military force (e.g., blockading Iran's oil exports) with the expectation that it would help his position with the voters. For if the American electorate knows nothing else, it understands that when it comes to gunboat diplomacy, Jimmy Carter is trespassing on Ronald Reagan's turf.

U.S. SOUTH AFRICA LOBBY
Karen Rothmyer

WEST SAHARAN PEACE TALKS
Stuart Schaar

BIG OIL VS. THE INDIES
Paul Vidich

SUBVERTING THE SAUDIS
Peter A. Iseman

CHRIST'S JOKE
Kurt Vonnegut

DHARMA DEMAGOGY
Eliot Weinberger

MIDDLETOWN REVISITED

AFTER T. M. I.—A MELTDOWN OF TRUST

McKINLEY C. OLSON

Middletown, Pennsylvania

Now that the one-year anniversary of the nuclear power accident that shook the world has come and gone, the crippled nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island can accurately be likened to a raw wound that will continue to bleed. That is the impression I carried away after spending a week in the vicinity of T.M.I. in March, attending meetings and talking to people who live in Pennsylvania's Harrisburg-York-Lancaster area.

First, most of the total cost of the accident—which present estimates put at $7 billion or more—is going to be shouldered by the public—by ratepayers and taxpayers. Next, it seems highly likely that more radioactive poisons will be released, intentionally or otherwise, from the stricken plant. And last, there is still the dread possibility that conditions inside the Unit 2 reactor could continue to deteriorate to the point where the damaged fuel core could go critical (initiating a nuclear chain reaction) and suffer a complete meltdown. This is part of the fragmented picture that is beginning to emerge a year after the awesome accident that began on March 28, 1979.

One of the most interesting aspects of the accident, to me, has been the radicalization of many people who live in the vicinity of the nuclear plant. Most of them are of German stock. They are, for the most part, decent, conservative, thrifty, hard-working people. But they are maddening in one respect: They have an inordinate respect for authority. Most of them were willing to put their blind trust in nuclear power simply because the government and the business estab-

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LETTERS.

RETROSPECTIVE POLEMIC

Washington

With an 18-percent-plus inflation rate, unemployment at 6.2 percent and heading upward, Carter's mess in Iran, Russian troops in Afghanistan and heaven knows what else, one might well question why Americans for Democratic Action's activities way back in 1948 warranted a convoluted polemic [John S. Rosenberg, "The A.D.A.'s Long Shadow," *The Nation*, Feb. 23] now. But that's your business. My interest is in setting the record straight.

(*1*) Mr. Rosenberg contends that "without the necessity to slay the specter of 'Henry Wallace and the Communists' . . . there probably never would have been an A.D.A. at all." This is rubbish. Wallace was still at the Commerce Department when the plans for A.D.A. were laid; A.D.A. was formed because Truman was turning away from the New Deal and Mrs. Roosevelt, Hubert Humphrey, Reinhold Niebuhr and others wanted a viable liberal organization for pressure from the left.

(*2*) Rosenberg states that "the A.D.A. was more concerned about the threat of Communism than . . . the abridgment of civil liberties. . . ." This is rubbish, too. A.D.A. was premised on the dual principle that liberals and Communists cannot work together and that the duty of protecting civil liberties, including those of the Communists, must fall largely on the liberals. Hence much, if not most, of A.D.A.'s energies in the period about which Rosenberg writes were spent defending civil liberties against McCarthyism—against HUAC, loyalty-security programs, Hoover's F.B.I. excesses, the Smith Act, etc.

(*3*) Rosenberg attacks Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s "Vital Center" as an effort "to separate the great body of liberalism from the left and deliver it to the center." Arthur Schlesinger certainly needs no defense from me, but anybody who actually read "Vital Center" would know it is not a plea for centrism but rather for a dynamic, activist, Third Force society capable of meeting the challenge of totalitarianism on the right and on the left (in 1948, Stalinism).

Any organization that has to be criticized for things it did more than three decades ago must have had a pretty good record since then, and I can agree with at least one of Rosenberg's statements, namely, that "we are still living under the fallout from '48." A.D.A.'s platform victory on the floor of the Democratic National Convention that year tied civil rights to the masthead of the party and was possibly the first major shot toward the civil rights revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. But Rosenberg doesn't mention anything like that memorable 1948 A.D.A. civil rights victory. So, too, he talks about the cold war without mentioning A.D.A.'s determined resistance to the Vietnam War at the very earliest stage. Possibly most important, he talks about A.D.A. destroying the popular front without making clear whether he would like to go back to a popular front of liberals and Communists. Maybe he does, but I don't think he'd have much company.

Joseph L. Rauh Jr.
Former National Chairman
Americans for Democratic Action

IRONY LOST

Arlington, Va.

The A.D.A. may have been based on the premise that working with Communists was impossible, but the conclusion that followed from this premise was purging the liberal movement of anyone to the left of Joseph Rauh. It could hardly have been otherwise, for as Schlesinger explained in "Vital Center" (yes, I have "actually" read it), the threat came not so much from the Communist as from the "progressive," whom he defined as "the fellow traveler or the fellow traveler of the fellow traveler." That covers a lot of territory, and it was all declared a free-fire zone for blanket attacks on not simply the correctness but the character and loyalty of anyone in it who refused to run for cover. Incidentally, Rauh seems to have forgotten that Schlesinger also praised the professionalism of Hoover and his F.B.I., advocated dismissing "suspicious persons" from government and described the Attorney General's list as "a convenient way of checking the more obvious Communist-controlled groups," even though it "leaves out organizations . . . which have a large proportion of non-Communist members, but rarely, if ever, oppose Communist objectives."

Of course the A.D.A. did some good things, and the civil rights fight at the Democratic convention was one of them. In the South, however, it spent more time attacking the Southern Conference for Human Welfare than in constructive work. When the A.D.A.'s national director planned a trip to North Carolina in 1949, he wrote the organization's Southern representative that "it would be my idea to make this aspect of A.D.A. [civil rights] very incidental, if I mentioned it at all." The Southern representative, who wanted to go even further, called for an end to the policy of holding integrated meetings and requested the executive secretary to "please move the civil rights plank further down in the draft . . . so it won't appear on the first page of Where We Stand." (Charles M. LaFollette to Alden Hopkins, December 8, 1949; Hopkins to John Tucker, November 11, 1949; Hopkins to James Loeb, December 14, 1949, all in A.D.A. Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.)

Rauh questions the relevance of the A.D.A.'s past (except for the good parts), but I discussed its role in destroying the popular front because we are still living with the consequences. A different essay could have examined different issues, perhaps assessing I. F. Stone's 1951 charge that the A.D.A. had become "a way station for scared radicals moving from possible smear as fellow travelers through a simon-pure certified homogenized non-red organization . . . into complete political inaction." Well, not complete, as it turned out, for many A.D.A.ers led the charge into Vietnam. Rauh claims that the organization opposed the war "at the very earliest stage," but its opposition was so faint as to be inaudible in the spring of 1965 when A.D.A.er Humphrey was still a superhawk and A.D.A.er Schlesinger was defending both intervention and escalation during the first teach-ins.

This is not the place, or rather the time, to debate the straightness of the line between the Truman Doctrine and the Gulf of Tonkin. It is, however, both the place and the time to note one of the most telling examples of the ideological conformity that descended thirty years ago, and that is the continuing tendency of liberals like Rauh to reduce every criticism to the issue of working with Communists, with its not so subtle implication that anyone who favored a popular front, or even anyone who simply opposed the methods necessary to

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by Nation Enterprises and © 1980 in the U.S.A. by the Nation Associates, Inc., 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. Tel.: 212-242-8400. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION.

Regular Subscription Price: One year, $25; two years, $45; six months, $14. Student rate, $17 a year. Add $5 per year postage for Canada and Mexico; $7 other foreign. All foreign subscriptions must be paid in equivalent U.S. funds.

EDITORIALS.

Letter From N.Y.C.

New York City has the largest public transit system in the nation; it is the vital circulatory system of the city; if these arteries clog, the city's economic heartbeat will falter. Yet the transit system is operating with outworn equipment and decaying facilities. Officials have said that if a $100 million preventive-maintenance program is not put into effect in the next fiscal year, the whole system will collapse. But, these officials warn, the cost of a settlement of the current transit strike may eat up that $100 million.

Faced with this crisis, led by Mayor Edward Koch, New York became an anti-union town. The transit strike did for the Mayor what Afghanistan and the hostages did for Jimmy Carter, enabling him to unite New Yorkers against greedy unions who want to bring the city to "the edge of bankruptcy" by "unreasonable demands" for a 30 percent wage increase. The 30 percent figure was pre-negotiation jawboning, but the Mayor could ignore that since he doesn't believe in bargaining. Fearful that he would be bound by a transit settlement in future negotiations with municipal employees, the Mayor absented himself from the negotiations. Instead, he appeared on bridges to tell New Yorkers plodding to work that they're "wonderful" and delivered neo-La Guardian homilies on radio about the necessity for motorists to stick their fingers in their radiators before starting off to ascertain that the motors are not overheated. In short, the Mayor prescribed chicken soup but stayed well out of the kitchen.

Gov. Hugh Carey, who will ultimately have to persuade the state legislature to come up with money for a settlement, was meanwhile keeping a low profile. The upstate-dominated legislature appeared in no mood to deliver on Carey's proposed legislative package because it would mean

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higher taxes in an election year. The Governor was also stuck with his pledge to maintain the 50-cent fare in return for Koch's pledge to withdraw his opposition to the multibillion-dollar Westway highway project—a monstrous auto MX. (Abandoning the project could have meant an additional $1.8 billion in funds for New York's strapped straphangers, by some estimates, but it enables Carey to buy the traditional construction workers' union support.) Meanwhile, in Washington, the Senate Budget Committee was slashing mass transit aid and increasing defense spending by $5 billion more than either President Carter or the House Budget Committee requested. Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina made much capital with the homefolks (he is up for re-election) by referring to New York's "fiscal debauchery" and deriding it as "a city on food stamps."

Seduced and abandoned by the politicians, New Yorkers dutifully re-enacted their Mayor's vision of the city as another Peking (from which he had recently returned), full of happy bicyclists. There was indeed a school's-out sense of freedom in the air in the strike's early days as people felt liberated from their grimy, dark, graffitied yet on the whole still efficient subways. Manhattan became an urban park—a city of backpackers, cyclists and joggers; the Mayor sang hosannas to the car-poolers and allowed that he might just try to make the practice permanent (even so, traffic jams became so bad at times that traffic engineers spoke darkly of a "grid lock"—the ultimate jam in which cars are totally stalled). The Transit Workers Union, with internal problems of its own, filled out the picture nicely, serving as a handy scapegoat for a lack of political will up and down the line. If the union would only give up its coffee breaks and overtime, implied Stephen Berger, a Koch-appointed member of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the state agency that runs the subways, a magical "productivity" would ensue, which would in turn transform subways and buses into models of gleaming efficiency. A few days later *The New York Times* editorialized that the "givebacks" were really necessary to pay for a wage settlement.

The suspicion grew that the union, whatever "just" pay increase it could rightfully expect, was being crucified on the cross of budgetary restraint—and that salvaging New York's mass transit system required more than fewer coffee breaks. New Yorkers were beginning to realize that they were hostages to politicians. Even as they were proving that although equipment and the political system might grind to a halt, human beings would endure, their patience was wearing thin.

Red Flag

From time to time, we receive communications from the Revolutionary Communist Party, an organization apparently dedicated to the proposition that rhetorical frenzy will hasten the revolution. We learn from our mail that R.C.P. adherents travel widely and get arrested for such enterprises as conducting a demonstration atop the Alamo and tossing leaflets on the coffin of George Meany during a funeral procession. Ordinarily, we are content to leave to the R.C.P.'s lawyers the task of explaining what all this has to do with the First Amendment. One item we saw recently, however, prompts us to say a few words.

It seems that thirteen persons affiliated with the R.C.P. were arrested in Beckley, West Virginia, on March 15 on the charge that they "did display a solid red flag mounted on a wooden pole which indicated sympathy with and support of ideals, institutions of government hostile, inimical and antagonistic to the form and spirit of the Constitution, Laws, Ideals and Institutions of the State of West Virginia and the United States of America, in violation of Chapter 61, Article 1, Section 6 of the West Virginia State Code, Code 1931 as amended." We had thought that such prosecutions stopped a half-century ago when the United States Supreme Court invalidated the five-year prison sentence imposed on 19-year-old Yetta Stromberg for the crime of displaying a red flag at the children's camp in California where she worked. On reflection, however, we decided that the police in Beckley really are up to date. What with the Supreme Court's treatment of First Amendment matters lately (*vide* the *Snepp* case), perhaps even the Court's decision in *Stromberg* is no longer safe. Maybe a bit of the R.C.P.'s rhetoric is justified.

U.S. Union Buster

"Who regulates the regulators?" is an oft-repeated question. Now we have a switch on that: Who'll protect the union in the agency established to protect unions? After several months of negotiations, contract talks between the National Labor Relations Board and its employees' union have broken down. The issues dividing management and workers are not wage-related, but they crucially affect the future strength of the N.L.R.B. union. Management is demanding "givebacks" in sections of the current contract relating to cause for discharge, the division of arbitration costs, the weighting of seniority in promotion decisions and protection of the bargaining unit. The union wants more aggressive agency compliance with Congressional mandates for flexible working hours and the training of clerical employees (overwhelmingly women and minorities) for professional jobs.

According to close observers of the bargaining process, the agency management team, led by assistant general counsel Dan Silverman (a former union official), has appeared at negotiating sessions unprepared, refused to make a general written offer, repeatedly stalled the talks, informally challenged the union's majority status and otherwise failed to bargain in good faith. In other words, management is stonewalling, attempting to break or severely weaken the union.

Nor is relief forthcoming from the agency's higher ranks. The otherwise liberal William Lubbers, recently appointed

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general counsel but still awaiting confirmation hearings, blandly condones his subordinates' union-busting antics. Indeed, Lubbers seems unable to control his management team, and the union is thinking about joining with anti-labor business groups to block his confirmation later this year, on grounds that he has shown himself an incompetent administrator.

All of this is ironic, since it appears that the agency is engaging in just those tactics it was established to discourage and correct under the National Labor Relations Act, which it administers. Basic to that act is the obligation on parties to collective bargaining to negotiate in good faith. Federal law imposes a similar obligation on Federal agencies and the labor organizations which represent their employees. The N.L.R.B., however, has a shocking record of abusing employee rights. During the past few years, the agency has been formally cited, or forced to settle, in at least a dozen major violations of employee rights secured by Federal law. The N.L.R.B. is a recidivist violator of the labor law, and shows no sign of reform.

We deplore this record, and the recent management initiatives which seem to have been taken in the anti-union spirit that obtained in the past—not least because their possible consequences extend well beyond the labor relations of a small Federal agency. Without a workable contract, agency performance will be inhibited, as will the protection of much of the working population.

Freeing Jimmy

Despite the continuing apparent success of Jimmy Carter's Rose Garden strategy in terms of delegate amassing, the when-is-he-coming-out speculation has been revived. His campaign chairman, Robert Strauss, has already floated a trial balloon suggesting some "non-political" trips. It seems to us that the President's lengthy vigil, which has obviously done nothing for the hostages and has come to resemble that of a religious acolyte awaiting a Sign, has also been on balance harmful to the country.

Carter's refusal to immerse himself in the fray has had a deleterious effect on what commentators wistfully call the "democratic dialogue" (the most memorable example of which so far has been Ronald Reagan's ringing "I paid for this microphone!"). The spectacle of a President making blatantly political statements and decisions thinly veiled in statesmanlike piety breeds skepticism among the voters. Whether this situation would be alleviated if he were out defending his policies, if he has any, wearing the honest motley of a candidate, is another matter. Instead of having to issue lofty pronunciamentos from his Pennsylvania Avenue redoubt and have them promptly labeled "political" by cynical commentators, he could at least cut out the media middlemen, as it were, and simply play politics openly.

So a liberated Jimmy Carter would be a modest benefit. The question is, how can he pry himself loose from his White House vigil without appearing to be breaking his solemn vow to the hostages? We have some positive suggestions here, none of which are incompatible with Carter's character and recent actions in office.

§ The Non-Political Trip. Already floated by Bob Strauss and a time-honored Presidential gambit that goes back at least to F.D.R. during World War II. Isn't there an Azalea Festival in Georgia this month? A perfect occasion for a major address on SALT II.

§ Communications Breakdown. Carter has already tried out the "failure in communications" technique by reversing himself on the United Nations resolution condemning Israeli settlements. He might say that, because of an error in transmission, he appeared to have said he would not campaign until the hostages were home, whereas what he actually meant was that he would not campaign until diplomatic relations were broken with Iran.

§ Sticky Pages. As with his inflation message, the President could say that in his original statement on the hostages he forgot to mention that he would come out when diplomatic relations were broken with the Iranian Government because he inadvertently skipped a page.

§ Foreign Trip. Presidents have often made political hay out of foreign trips before cheering crowds who are seen on television back home. The President could announce an extended, May-July combined round-the-world and show-the-flag trip, during which he would visit friendly nations or conduct B-52 flyovers of unfriendly nations.

§ The Absentee Presidency. It is written in ancient Arabic tales of the king who went out among his subjects disguised as a beggar. President Carter might announce a similar junket. He would emphasize the austerity of his traveling conditions as an inspiration to all Americans to fight inflation by curtailing consumption. He might ride the rails—thus dramatizing the importance of public transportation—or even hitchhike (share the ride).

This last option seems the most beneficial of all. Not only would it acquaint an increasingly secluded President firsthand with the problems of his subjects, it would also effectively remove him from all public appearances and duties, thus insuring that there will be no more public flip-flops, diplomatic untruths, backtracking, stuck-together pages, political ploys from the bully pulpit, Afghan overreactions and general public hypocrisy. This "volatile" electorate is so fickle that it will have forgotten about Jimmy Carter completely within four weeks, and so when he resurfaces at Madison Square Garden in New York in August, he will once again be "Jimmy Who?"—the political unknown, innocent of ties with Washington. A grateful Democratic Party will nominate him by thunderous acclamation.

EMENDATION

Research for Fred J. Cook's "Reprise of 1979: Big Oil Primes a New Crisis at the Pumps" [*The Nation*, April 12] was supported by the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington, D.C.

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HOW GM "PROJECT CENTERS" CREATE CARS

FROM CONCEPT TO CUSTOMER IN THREE YEARS AND THREE BILLION DOLLARS

Throughout the history of the automobile industry, product change was almost always evolutionary. But in 1973, GM determined that the times required revolutionary changes. It started its first Project Center—which by itself heralded a revolution in the use of science and technology to meet the changing demands of the marketplace. A few months later, the Arab countries launched the oil embargo. Fortunately, machinery was already in motion in GM to create and develop new cars and components in a new way and faster than ever before.

GM's first Project Center brought out totally new full-size cars: smaller, yet roomier, and far more efficient than their predecessors. The advertisements said they were "designed and engineered for a changing world"—and they were. Another Project Center, begun in 1975, developed the immensely popular GM X-cars.

Led by the five car divisions, Project Centers gather people, ideas, and knowledge from all 30 divisions and staffs of General Motors. In the first stage, which we call "concepting," experimental engineers, environmental scientists, forward planners, and marketing experts pool their thinking. Their objective: what the marketplace will require. This is the most important stage. Here we must determine not only what kind of car, but how many we might be able to build and sell years later. Economics, customer tastes, availability of various kinds of fuels must be compared with state-of-the-art technology—and what steps must be taken to advance that technology quickly yet surely.

In the "concepting" stage, a new car is conceived. If the car is to be sold to customers three years later, construction of new plants must begin and basic tooling must be ordered.

The second phase of the Project Center takes 24 to 30 months. It encompasses development, design, structural analysis, handling analysis, emissions, noise and vibration, safety, reliability, serviceability and repairability, manufacturing, assembly, marketing, financing.

Advanced product engineers and research scientists work with the one hundred fifty to two hundred people at the Project Center and thousands more in the staffs and divisions to transfer new science and technology to the new car. Components are hand-built and "cobbled" into existing models for road testing.

Prototype cars are hand-built at a cost of more than $250,000 each. These enable the Project Center team to determine how newly developed, pretested components operate as a unit. Then, pilot models will be built from production tooling and tested some more. New technology, such as structural analysis by computer, saves time. Lead time has been reduced by 25% from ten years ago, when cars were far less complex.

After almost four million miles, nearly three billion dollars, and nearly three years of work, the new cars—quite unlike anything before them—start coming off the production line at a rate of better than one a minute.

There are now eight Project Centers in General Motors. Four are developing new cars using hydrocarbon fuels, one is creating an electric car, and others are working on computerized engines and emission controls, a new kind of automatic transmission, and the inflatable restraint system.

New and revolutionary cars can't be mass produced for the road overnight. But by putting all the parts of General Motors to work together, we found a way to speed up the process. We have integrated the creativity of thousands of human minds to make invention into reality when it's needed.

This advertisement is part of our continuing effort to give customers useful information about their cars and trucks and the company that builds them.

General Motors

People building transportation to serve people

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(Continued From Page 450)
destroy it, was a conscious or unconscious supporter of Communist goals.

Clearly some popular fronters were Communists who favored the Soviet Union (though even that was not necessarily disloyal), just as some who favored Truman's policies were reactionaries. The real issue, in short, was never whom one could work with but what one should work for. The popular front opposed the purpose and direction of Truman's policy abroad and the national security state required to impose it at home; the A.D.A. liberals accepted those policies at home and abroad, complaining only about "excesses," and denounced their critics as Stalinist stooges. That attitude demolished the faint trace of domestic Communism, but it also discredited all the non-Communist progressives and dissenters, and ultimately even the A.D.A. itself.

The point of my "convoluted polemic" was to remark on the irony of the A.D.A.'s now having to eat the bitter fruit of the tree it planted in '48. But that irony is lost on Joseph Rauh, who continues to criticize Carter (not, interestingly, the Carter Doctrine) as though there were no relation among the A.D.A.'s activities in the past, the absence of a vigorous left-liberal coalition, and the current location, character and conduct of the not so vital center.

John S. Rosenberg

ARTICLES.

AMERICANS FOR SALE

The South Africa Lobby

KAREN ROTHMYER

One day in February 1974, six white South Africans gathered in the office of Prime Minister John Vorster to discuss what should be done to fight back against their country's growing international isolation. In addition to Vorster, the group included Gen. Hendrik van den Bergh, head of South Africa's Bureau of State Security (BOSS), and Information Minister Dr. Cornelius Mulder, the man touted as Vorster's successor.

The group had come together to hear from Mulder's handpicked Secretary of Information, Eschel Rhoodie, how Rhoodie proposed to increase the effectiveness of his department. The urbane, 40-year-old Rhoodie was convinced after more than a dozen years abroad as an information officer that South Africa must go on a public relations offensive. As Rhoodie described the meeting last year in an interview with the *Rand Daily Mail*, he told Vorster and the others, "I want you to approve not an information asset but a propaganda war in which no rules or regulations would count." The plan, which Rhoodie claimed was inspired by Central Intelligence Agency contacts in the United States, was agreed to, and along with it, a secret fund to finance operations. By his own reckoning, Rhoodie, with the much-feared van den Bergh's assistance, orchestrated between 160 and 180 secret projects through 1978, at a cost approaching $100 million.

There is no available count of how many of these projects involved the United States, but enough is known about them to indicate that this country was highly important—perhaps the most important of Rhoodie's targets. American operations ranged from wining and dining Congressmen to secretly bankrolling the purchase of American newspapers, underwriting phony academic conferences and sponsoring golfing junkets for businessmen.

In the end, Rhoodie precipitated his own downfall. A slim, handsome man with a taste for Jaguars and customized executive jets, Rhoodie was at the least careless about accounting for his secret funds. Information about these irregularities—perhaps leaked by Mulder's political enemies—began to appear in the press in early 1978. A coverup ensued, with the result that in the end, Rhoodie, Mulder and Vorster were all driven from office (van den Bergh retired). Rhoodie fled to Europe, only to be extradited and convicted late last year on five counts of fraud. He is still appealing that sentence.

Independent interviews, together with South African and European press reports, tapes made by Rhoodie and the findings of a South African Government board of inquiry known as the Erasmus Commission show that Rhoodie was able to work his way with ease into some of the most powerful offices in America. Even allowing for Rhoodie's tendency to exaggerate (and possibly even invent) some of his successes, they also provide evidence that Rhoodie had no problem recruiting Americans to assist him in his efforts.

The story of John McGoff is a case in point. In 1974, at the time Rhoodie was winning approval for his secret operations, McGoff, a middle-aged Michigan publisher, was a frustrated would-be tycoon. The Panax newspaper chain which he headed, consisting of about forty small daily and weekly papers mainly in the Middle West, was losing money despite McGoff's acknowledged sales ability and his flair for self-advancement. Even the local Williamston, Michigan, voters didn't seem to appreciate McGoff's talents: they threw him off the school board in 1974 after he'd attacked everything from Federal support for school lunches to the local superintendent of schools.

But there was one place where McGoff, the name-dropping son of a Pittsburgh steelworker, was made to feel both welcome and important. As a result of having made the acquaintance of a South African information officer named L.E.S. de Villiers, McGoff was invited to South Africa in 1968. He found it much to his liking, and in time came to know Rhoodie, Mulder and even Vorster himself.

According to the Erasmus report, as well as an interview that Rhoodie gave to *Elseviers*, a Dutch magazine, last year,

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McGoff approached the South Africans in 1974 and suggested that they could do him and themselves a favor by helping to bankroll him in an effort to buy *The Washington Star*. McGoff was given $10 million, according to the Erasmus report; but for reasons which are not clear—most likely because he still couldn't raise the additional financing he needed—eventually abandoned the *Star* effort. Instead, he used the money, so the Erasmus report claims, to buy *The Sacramento Union*, which he acquired in late 1974. Later, McGoff added weeklies in Texas and California to his private holdings and made inquiries and in some cases bids for larger properties including the short-lived New York *Trib*. (See Rothmyer, "Apartheid Trib," *The Nation*, April 14, 1979.) Meanwhile, he started acquiring about $2 million worth of Panax stock, a move that eventually put him in control of the company, and began bragging to acquaintances about his 100-foot yacht and a home in Miami Beach, which Florida records reveal was actually owned by a Swiss conduit for secret South African funds.

According to the Erasmus Commission, McGoff took additional amounts of money totaling $1.7 million in 1975 to buy a half-interest in UPITN, the second largest news-film producer and distributor in the world. (The other half of UPITN was jointly owned by United Press International and Independent Television News of Britain.) In late 1977, McGoff sold half of his California interests to Richard Mellon Scaife, publisher of a small newspaper in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and a member of the wealthy Pittsburgh Mellon family. Scaife at one time owned Forum World Features, a London-based news agency which was exposed in the British press as being a C.I.A. front in 1975, just after Scaife had closed it down. Scaife has declined comment.

Potentially significant as McGoff's acquisitions may have been, there is little evidence to suggest that either Panax or McGoff's personal holdings became effective propaganda tools for the South African Government. Former executives of various McGoff newspapers say that while they were occasionally ordered to run pro-South Africa articles and were supplied with magazines and other material extolling South Africa, they felt no concerted effort on McGoff's part to shape their editorial decisions. Persons familiar with UPITN recall few instances in which its offerings suggested any special relationship with South Africa. (UPI president Roderick Beaton calls any suggestion that McGoff influenced news coverage "pure baloney and libelous.")

It may be that some of McGoff's other efforts to assist South Africa were in fact more productive. In 1974, McGoff helped to arrange a visit between Mulder and then Vice President Gerald Ford, whom McGoff knew as a Michigan Congressman. In 1976, McGoff testified before Congress on the importance of continued U.S.-South African economic ties. In 1978, he urged business leaders at a conference in Houston to give money to help defeat Senator Dick Clark of Iowa, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, whom McGoff described as having a "penchant for the destruction of South Africa."

The Justice Department is now looking into the possibility that McGoff violated Federal law by acting as an unregistered foreign agent for South Africa, while the Securities and Exchange Commission is attempting to determine whether McGoff used secret South African money to gain control of American companies. Last July, McGoff issued a statement in which he said, "I am not now, nor have I ever been, an agent or front for any foreign government, including the Republic of South Africa." He has remained, however, unavailable for interviews, as have his close associates.

If a fair amount is now known about South Africa's efforts to buy its way into the American media, more has been alleged but far less substantiated about Rhoodie's efforts to buy political influence. In a series of tapes he made in Europe following his fall from power in 1978, Rhoodie said that secret funds had gone into several U.S. political campaigns. These included, according to Rhoodie, $250,000 in 1978 to defeat Dick Clark, $20,000 in 1976 to aid the Carter New York state primary campaign and $150,000 to defeat Senator John Tunney of California. In addition, the South African press reported that $3.9 million was channeled into the Ford Presidential campaign in 1976.

Thus far, there is no proof to back up Rhoodie's claims, which are denied by the parties alleged to have benefited. However, such donations could have been made through third parties, meaning they would be very hard to trace and the beneficiaries could be unaware of any wrongdoing.

It is true, certainly, that Rhoodie made considerable efforts to woo American politicians. In 1974, Rhoodie hired Washington lobbyist Donald de Kieffer, at that time only 28, of the firm then called Collier, Shannon, Rill and Edwards. In 1976, he added the politically well-connected New York public relations firm of Sydney S. Baron and Company. (See Peter H. Stone, "Muldergate on Madison Avenue," *The Nation*, April 14, 1979.) De Kieffer and Baron were paid a total of at least $3 million out of Rhoodie's secret fund. However, there is no indication that either of them was involved in illegal political activity, and both made regular reports to the Justice Department. Those reports show, among other things, that de Kieffer entertained handsomely on behalf of the South Africans, with expenditures averaging $30,000 a year. Members of the two firms also gave personal donations to political candidates sympathetic to their clients' interests.

Among the Baron company's projects was the arrangement of three conferences on investment in South Africa, to which American businessmen were invited. Former President Ford came too, as a speaker, to one of the conferences held in Houston and went home $10,000 richer for his trouble. While the conference costs ostensibly were underwritten by South African corporations, in fact, as Rhoodie told *Elseviers*, it was he who picked up the tab.

Rhoodie appears to have recognized early on—perhaps from the six years or so he spent in the United States—that American politicians love to travel, especially if someone else is footing the bill. A problem in offering such travel is that Federal law forbids the taking of gifts from foreign governments by members of Congress. So Rhoodie came up with several "fronts" to extend his invitations. One of these was

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South African businessman Werner Ackerman, who invited at least a dozen Representatives and one Senator to South Africa in 1974 and 1975. In the case of five of these Americans, a State Department official told CBS in 1978 that he had extended warnings before the visits that the South African Government was underwriting the cost.

The five were John Dent of Pennsylvania, who is no longer in office, Richard Ichord of Missouri, and Bob Wilson of California, all of whom denied being warned; Harold Runnels of New Mexico, who declined comment, and Senator Carl Curtis of Nebraska, who is no longer in office and who said he couldn't remember the circumstances.

Another "front," which Rhoodie set up in 1975, was the Foreign Affairs Association. Republican Congressman Robert Bauman of Maryland and his wife took a free trip from the F.A.A. in 1976, despite talk that it was being funded by the South African Department of Information. The Erasmus Commission confirmed not only that this was the case but also that the head of the F.A.A. had been doing little to earn his salary other than to plagiarize other people's work and chase women through Europe. The organization was rapidly disbanded.

Rhoodie could point to various events which might suggest to his superiors that South Africa's attention to the comfort and education of American politicians did indeed pay off. When, for example, South African Chief of Staff Hugo Biermann was denied a visa in 1974, lobbyist de Kieffer was able to convince several Congressmen to protest. The visa was granted and during his visit here Biermann met with a number of Congressmen at a gathering arranged by Representative Bauman. In 1976, when South Africa mounted a determined campaign to end Export-Import Bank restrictions on trade financing involving South Africa, about twenty Senators and twenty-five Representatives sent letters supporting such a move.

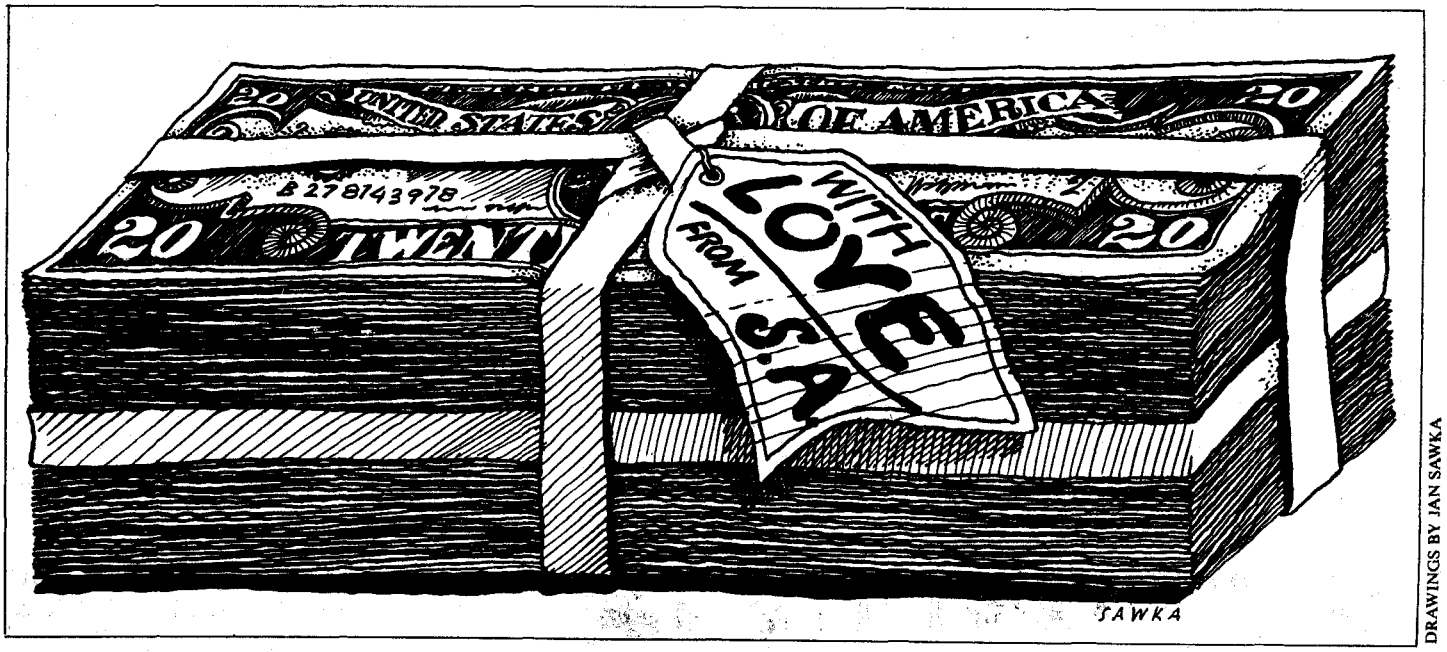
When Congressman Wilson visited South Africa in 1975, he told reporters that he and his group felt that South Africa "is the most misunderstood friend the United States has," while Congressman Bauman came back to tell *The Baltimore Sun* that "sadly, they [blacks] do not have complete freedom, nor, as many of them admitted, the education which would allow an intelligent exercise of political rights."

Last year, allegations about South Africa's influence-buying efforts led to a House ethics committee investigation. The inquiry lasted a few days, held no hearings, and ended with an announcement by its chairman, Charles Bennett, a Florida Democrat, that "nobody on the House side has violated any law or done anything unethical."

While Washington was the focus of much of Rhoodie's attention, his efforts to win friends were not restricted to Federal officials. Meldrim Thomson, while still Governor of New Hampshire, visited South Africa in 1978 as a guest of the South African Freedom Foundation, yet another Rhoodie front. Thomson came back to report effusively that Soweto, the black township outside Johannesburg, is "just wonderful" as a place to live and that Vorster was "a statesman of great courage."

Others who visited South Africa or Namibia courtesy of the foundation include the head of the American Legion and retired Chief of Staff Adm. Thomas Moorer. More recently, the foundation, now openly assisted by the Government, helped sponsor a visit by a group of four Americans to act as impartial observers of the "internal elections" in Rhodesia last year. That group, whose members included a former Ambassador and a former *Fortune* editor, was quoted in a syndicated story as praising Ian Smith's "heroic struggle" against Communism and as fully satisfied with the Smith regime's conduct of the elections.

Rhoodie was particularly alert to the need to counter efforts aimed at discouraging U.S. investment in South Africa. For this, he called on South Africa's big guns: Gary Player, the pro golfer, and Christiaan Barnard, the heart surgeon. They did their part. Between 1974 and 1977, according to South African press reports, Player on at least three occasions invited groups of ten to fifteen top-level U.S. businessmen to South Africa for two weeks. Player would golf with



DRAWINGS BY JAN SAWKA

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the men, help them to improve their games, and accompany them on tours of business and government offices. The businessmen paid their own air fares but all costs in South Africa were picked up by anonymous donors. A year ago, Player acknowledged publicly that on at least one occasion, the visit and his fee ($30,000, according to Rhoodie) were actually paid for by the South African Department of Information. "I am a professional player and I am proud of having been able to be of assistance," Player told reporters.

Dr. Barnard, too, acknowledged that he had accepted an estimated $25,000 in Government assistance to help finance his international trips. "I never did this for the Government but for South Africa," Barnard told the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*. Barnard declined to give details of his journeys, but the *Sunday Times* noted that he had taken two recent trips to the United States, one in 1978, during which he addressed a seminar conducted by the Institute for Plural Societies (a Rhoodie creation), and one in 1979, during which he spoke to a group of Senators and Representatives. Rhoodie told *Elseviers* that in 1978 Barnard met at his request with George Meany, the late leader of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. Union officials say, however, that they recall no such meeting and that even if it did occur it produced no change in policy.

Rhoodie also told *Elseviers* that he had provided $300,000 to underwrite slickly designed supplements on investment in South Africa which appeared for three years running in *Business Week* and that he had heavily subsidized the Christian League of Southern Africa. Several members of the league traveled around the United States in the fall of 1978 urging a "Christian interpretation" of events in South Africa and attacking church groups that opposed U.S. economic involvement in South Africa.

For their part, some U.S. business leaders needed no particular encouragement to befriend South Africa. Elwood Andrews, vice president of Allegheny Ludlum Industries, which has consistently emphasized the need for southern African minerals, was recruited to speak at all three Baron-organized seminars. Rhoodie claims that in fact, Andrews's enthusiasm went even further. He told *Elseviers* that Andrews proposed to him and Mulder in 1977 a plan under which Allegheny Ludlum would invest $1 million in South Africa if South Africa would put the same amount into helping the black "moderate" Rhodesian party of Bishop Abel Muzorewa. Rhoodie says that the Rhodesian portion of the plan was carried out. Allegheny Ludlum, in a recent letter to the S.E.C., acknowledged that Andrews had met with Mulder, but called Rhoodie's claim "a complete fabrication."

And so the list of Rhoodie's projects goes on: $15 million (by South African Government estimate) to underwrite a subtly slanted news magazine, *To The Point*, which was distributed free to 30,000 persons in England and the United States; $1 million to underwrite ads attacking U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young and others, which were signed by the "Club of 10" and appeared in a number of papers, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

In South Africa, Americans David Witts, a Dallas attorney, and Beurt SerVaas, publisher of *The Saturday Evening Post*, became ostensible part-owners of a newspaper fully underwritten by Rhoodie in 1978. At that time, according to the Erasmus report, following the departure of his original front-man, Rhoodie "undertook to supply the newspaper with funds from the Exchequer for at least two years." Both Witts and SerVaas, a former C.I.A. agent who is a close friend of John Connally, remained unavailable for comment over several months. Recently, SerVaas claimed to *The Indianapolis Star*, which had begun digging into his South African connections, that he had never actually gone through with the newspaper deal.

Rhoodie's revelations and the report of the Erasmus Commission conjure up a picture of a Rhoodie information octopus reaching into countries around the globe, with no group—academics, politicians, businessmen or religious leaders—beyond its range, and American intelligence agencies playing an unknown, possibly supporting, role.

But even this is not the whole story. One additional revelation which emerged from the Muldergate scandal, as it became known in South Africa, is that the Rhoodie program was only one of several operated by Government officials. Others were (and are, so far as anyone knows) conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Defense, BOSS and the Police Security branch. The Department of Defense—which fed funds into the Department of Information as well as into its own projects—spent at least $110 million on secret projects between 1974 and 1979, according to recent South African Government figures.

Virtually nothing is known about these programs with the exception of the case of the Space Research Corporation, recently revealed as being 20 percent secretly owned by South Africa. Space Research, which straddles the border between Vermont and Quebec, is already under investigation by both U.S. and Canadian authorities on charges it sold ammunition and a gun system to South Africa in defiance of a U.N. embargo. [See Michael T. Klare "South Africa's U.S. Weapons Connections," *The Nation*, July 28-August 4, 1979.] Two top-level company officials pleaded guilty in March to the illegal sales.

The Burlington Free Press reported on March 14 that Armscor, the manufacturing company of the South African military, arranged in 1977 to inject $10 million into the firm through a dummy corporation. In the United States, most of the press was content to repeat briefly what was being said in South African newspapers at the time of the Erasmus report, and then to drop the matter. In South Africa, the new Government which took over has made it clear that the Muldergate era is now over. Last year it moved to muzzle the press, an effort that probably failed only because of considerable international attention. Rhoodie appears to have reached some agreement under which he is being dealt with relatively gently in return for his silence on sensitive matters.

Even the Erasmus Commission, for all its expressed shock and indignation, recommended "a prohibition on the putting of questions to and the answering of questions by Ministers of Parliament if such questions relate to any department's secret fund." □

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DIPLOMATIC SANDS

The Secret West Saharan Peace Talks

STUART SCHAAR

For several months, representatives of Algeria and Morocco have been shuttling between North Africa and Geneva for secret talks which may lead to a negotiated settlement of the war between the Algerian-backed Polisario Front and Morocco in the mineral-rich Western Sahara. These emissaries are close to the centers of power in Algiers and Rabat and their involvement indicates that the effort is viewed seriously in both capitals. For months the interlocutors have been searching for possible areas of agreement. The fact that all parties in the Saharan war deny these preliminary discussions to outsiders and refuse to comment on their progress highlights their significance and sensitivity.

Algerian representatives include Ahmed Talib Al-Ibrahimi, adviser (with Cabinet rank) to President Chadli Benjedid, and Lieut. Col. Kasdi Mirbah, former chief of military security and, since May 1979, Secretary General of National Defense responsible for Western Saharan and Polisario affairs. Representing King Hassan II are former Cabinet minister Ahmed Reda Guedira and Gen. Ahmed Dlimi. Dlimi is the most powerful officer in the royal armed forces, and Guedira, the King's confidant, is a shrewd lawyer and an experienced political troubleshooter.

Numerous pressures have coalesced to bring about these discussions. In Morocco, the threat of a potential military coup among the disgruntled 50,000 royal troops in the Western Sahara, who have absorbed high casualties, combined with increased social unrest reflected in a wave of strikes, may convince Hassan that it is time to wind down the war. In Algeria, President Benjedid, initially chosen as a compromise by competing military clans, has not been able to assert full authority over these diverse constituents. In order not to alienate sectors of the polity, his Government must balance a wide range of political interests, and has done so with mixed results. This has led to dialogue and debate at the apex of power, but Algeria, having experienced thirteen years of forceful, centralized rule under Col. Houari Boumedienne, faces new uncertainties. President Benjedid's regime is not yet sure when and how to assert its authority, and where to draw its strongest support. Moreover, the Algerian economy has reached a difficult juncture, with unequal income distribution and unbalanced investment patterns. Its planners now see the need to improve the lot of the peasantry, if only to develop a market for industries created in the 1970s. Emphasis is shifting to these pressing domestic concerns, making it even more imperative to find a new way to resolve the seemingly endless war.

While the meetings in Geneva may promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict, observers in North Africa note several obstacles to a successful completion of the negotiating cycle. Most important, the Polisario has reportedly been excluded from participation. This would not be a serious matter if Algerian and Polisario views of a settlement were similar, though even then the procedural question—who speaks for whom—would remain salient. As the contacts now unfold, agreement between the Polisario and Algeria may be difficult to achieve.

The Polisario's forceful advocacy of intensifying the war and attacking Moroccan territory north of the Western Sahara is a measure of its independent stance. Furthermore, Polisario officials have been downgrading the present talks. On February 27, Muhammad Lamine Ahmed, Prime Minister of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (S.A.D.R.), the governing wing of the Polisario Front, explained, "No one can talk in behalf of any people whose own country exists. We know that the war will end through negotiations between Morocco and the S.A.D.R. All wars end like this." The Prime Minister further claimed that the talks had nothing to do with the Polisario but rather were bilateral discussions between Algeria and Morocco.

Since the actions of a state always reflect broader geopolitical interests than those of a liberation movement, the position of the Polisario leadership that Algeria cannot properly represent its views in talks with Morocco becomes understandable. In particular, there are many long-standing border disputes between Algeria and Morocco that are still unresolved, as well as one pressing Algerian economic problem—

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exporting iron ore from Tindouf (in its own Sahara) by way of Atlantic coastal ports.

Such tensions as may exist between the Polisario and Algeria are normal during wars of national liberation and need not lead to rifts between combatants and their allies. In fact, the Algerian-Polisario alliance has on the whole been fruitful for both parties. During the past decade Algeria has emerged as the strongest power in North Africa, thanks largely to oil and gas exports which will generate earnings of $9 billion this year. It possesses the most effective air force in the region, and its central role in the nonaligned movement has provided a large array of international allies.

Yet Morocco poses a threat to Algeria's dominant regional position. By first annexing the northern part of the Western Sahara in November 1975, and then by taking over the rest in August 1979, it has more than tripled its geographical area and has added important mineral reserves (including phosphates, uranium and perhaps oil) to its resource base. During the last five years, its endeavors have been supported by the United States, France, Spain and Saudi Arabia. Because Algeria is intent on rectifying these shifts, the Saharan struggle has become central to its foreign policy and the Polisario has benefited greatly from this support. Algeria has contributed money, arms, military equipment and food, costing between $1.5 million and $2 million in recent months. Equally important, it has granted sanctuary to both the Saharan armed forces and thousands of refugees. Diplomatically, Algeria has been instrumental in securing recognition for the S.A.D.R. from thirty-six countries.

The Polisario nevertheless remains an independent force. Military successes, increased aid from other states (especially Libya) and growing diplomatic recognition (with the establishment of separate diplomatic missions overseas) have all helped to create a new dynamic which Algeria and Morocco will have to consider in the near future. This will be complicated because each party is inclined to view self-determination and sovereignty in its own way. Moroccans officially claim all of the Western Sahara as an integral part of their kingdom. Algeria asserts the need for self-determination in the Sahara and has backed Polisario claims of establishing sovereignty there. The Polisario consists of many Saharans whose fathers were veterans of earlier major liberation struggles and who have deep attachments to the land which they consider home and to which they want to return. Some leaders of the Polisario have been fighting for almost a decade for the same territory that Morocco now controls or claims. The S.A.D.R. views the Moroccan occupation of the Western Sahara as an invasion of its country and is fighting to expel the invaders. Each of the two major protagonists therefore wants its flag to fly alone in the territory.

The Moroccans have been willing to concede everything except the essential sovereignty over all the Western Sahara. Yet King Hassan has reportedly told members of his retinue that he will accept the principle of self-determination for Western Saharans if elections are organized by his administrators. Since Algeria and the Polisario will doubtless reject this offer, the problem of internationally organized elections remains. Once a formula is worked out, determining which population may vote is a more difficult task. Of approximately 100,000 to 125,000 Western Saharans, at least 50,000 are located in refugee camps on Algerian territory; another 12,000 to 15,000 make up the Polisario armed forces. Still others are living under Moroccan control. Moreover, since 1975 thousands of Moroccans born north of the Sahara have migrated into the region. Who will be allowed to vote?

By taking a hard line on the sovereignty issue, the Moroccan regime has boxed itself into a potentially explosive position. Close observers believe that major compromises reached too rapidly on the sovereignty issue may trigger a Moroccan military coup. Will the military tolerate sharing sovereignty with the Polisario? Will the Polisario accept anything short of total victory? Do Morocco and Algeria have other plans in mind? All of these questions, to which no one has yet offered cogent answers, must be resolved, not only to achieve a settlement but also to insure peace in the long term.

There are signs, however, that Morocco's assignment of two offensive armored columns to the Sahara (code-named Ouhoud and Zallaqa) and the projected creation of a third one within two months is a signal by the King to his military that he wants to intensify the war. Hassan, buoyed by the U.S. decision to supply him with nearly $250 million worth of weapons, has been expected to launch an offensive in an attempt to pacify domestic critics and strengthen his bargaining position. Such an offensive may serve as a cover for Hassan's retreat from the war and compromise on the sovereignty issue. But for his strategy to succeed, the King needs military victories. These will be difficult if not impossible to achieve against well-trained, well-armed and highly motivated Polisario commandos, who have already begun to shift to a new stage of conventional warfare by engaging Moroccan troops in pitched battles. In the process they are absorbing higher casualties than they did in hit-and-run operations, but they are also inflicting heavy blows to Moroccan morale. The Polisario no doubt intends to capitalize on these in order to come to the negotiating table in a position of strength.

Algeria, therefore, has little to lose in waiting out the present intensified phase of the war while continuing to talk to Morocco. If the Polisario gains, Algeria can push for its inclusion in the talks. By tilting openly toward Morocco, the Carter Administration has locked itself into Hassan's strategy. It too will wait out the present phase of the war, hoping that the Moroccan forces win and strengthen Hassan's bargaining position. If, as seems more likely, Moroccan military morale ebbs, and rumors of coups resurface, Carter will have to respond one way or another to Hassan's inevitable pleas for still more arms to save his shaky throne.

This summer, Congress must approve appropriations for the Moroccan arms package already committed for 1981. The occasion warrants hearings into the progress of Algerian-Moroccan bilateral discussions and the intensification of the war. The American public should know how their policy makers expect the war to end and at what price to U.S. taxpayers. □

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DECIMATION OF INDEPENDENTS

Big Oil's War On Unbranded Gas Dealers

PAUL VIDICH

Oil industry earnings attained unprecedented levels in 1979. Exxon's net income rose 55.8 percent to a record $4.3 billion, while Texaco's net rose 106 percent and Sohio's 164 percent. But one industry group was conspicuously absent from last year's oil-profits honor roll—the nearly 3,000 unbranded independent gasoline stations that went out of business in 1979. That these 3,000 firms, all of which had grown robustly since 1975, could go under in the oil industry's most profitable year ever is eloquent testimony to the continuing monopoly that Big Oil exerts over refining and retailing in this country. It is also an object lesson in the predatory way Big Oil used its monopoly to increase profits during an energy crisis.

Information collected over a three-month period from oil industry sources, the Department of Energy and testimony presented to Congress shows how the major oil companies used the unregulated gasoline spot market to cripple their unbranded competition. In normal times, unbranded gas stations rely on the spot market for up to 30 percent of their total gasoline supply. In late 1978 and 1979, large purchases of gasoline by the majors on the spot market dried up that supply and pushed the price of the available gasoline beyond reach of their smaller competitors. The upshot was that the unbranded stations got less gas, the public got less gas, but the majors sold as much as they ever had—at much higher prices—and 20 percent of their unbranded competition was put out of business. Oil company executives deny any allegations that they acted improperly; nonetheless, decimation of the independents is now being slowly investigated by the Federal Trade Commission and by Congressman John Dingell's Energy and Power Subcommittee.

Unbranded independents are known to motorists under such names as Merit, Sigmor or Power Test. Unlike the major oil companies, which are vertically integrated from crude production to gasoline retailing, the independents make money only one way—pumping gas. They have traditionally provided the price competition that has kept America's gas prices low, and this service has done little to endear them to the major oil companies.

The wholesale elimination of unbranded stations in 1979 occurred even though the Energy Department has an explicit statutory mandate to protect them. The Emergency Petroleum Allocation Act, which was passed during the 1973 Arab oil embargo, was intended by Congress to prevent the major oil companies from using shortages to their competitive advantage. The law states that the "competitive viability of independent refiners, small refiners and nonbranded independent marketers" should be preserved. The failure of the Energy Department to carry out this mandate has aroused some Washington energy experts. Among them is David Schooler, staff counsel to the House Subcommittee on Energy and Power, who says, "What everyone seems to forget about is that the Emergency Petroleum Allocation Act was not just to deal with shortages but was designed to protect the independents. But the D.O.E., they could give a damn about the independents. They've never understood the role of competition in the industry, or they never seemed to."

The 1978-79 offensive by the majors against the unbranded stations was a reaction to the substantial growth the independents experienced between 1974 and 1978. The underlying cause of this spurt was their access to increasing amounts of gasoline from the major oil companies through oil jobbers. Oil jobbers are the independent wholesalers who purchase discount gasoline from the major refiners and distribute it to the majors' retail stations—or at least they are supposed to. In practice, by exploiting loopholes in the Department of Energy regulations, the jobbers were able to acquire an average of 950 million additional gallons of gasoline per month from the top fifteen oil companies. Jobbers found it increasingly attractive to resell that gasoline on the unregulated spot market, where it was purchased by the unbranded independents. By the beginning of 1978, the spot market had become a source of 30 percent of the gasoline sold by unbranded independents, according to Jack Blum, general counsel to the independent marketers' trade association, in testimony before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Power in December 1978.

Other important sources of the unbranded independents' gasoline are the nation's small refiners. They too have greatly prospered in the past five years under the protective wing of D.O.E. regulations. In May 1978, special subsidies to small refiners amounted to between 1 and 4.5 cents per gallon of gas. A construction boom in small refineries took place between 1975 and 1977, when forty-one new small refineries were built or spun off in the United States. This reversed a long decline. While total U.S. refining capacity was increasing by only 12.9 percent in that period, small refineries (with a capacity up to 30,000 barrels per day) increased their crude distillation capacity by 48.9 percent. That added about 150,000 barrels per day to the total gasoline supply, and much of this production was sold to the unbranded independents.

The increasingly abundant supplies of gasoline, combined with the unbranded independents' traditional practice of selling their gasoline 4 to 5 cents below the majors, enabled them to cut significantly into the latter's market share. Between 1974 and 1977, eight of the top eleven oil companies saw their share decline—and for five of them the drop was significant, reported *The Lundberg Letter*, a weekly industry newsletter which ranks the companies by sales volume.

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Moreover, price competition by the unbranded stations kept all gasoline prices low. The average price of leaded regular gasoline rose only 10 cents per gallon between 1975 and 1977. When adjusted to 1970 dollars, as was done by Prof. Robert Pindyck of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the real price of gasoline actually declined.

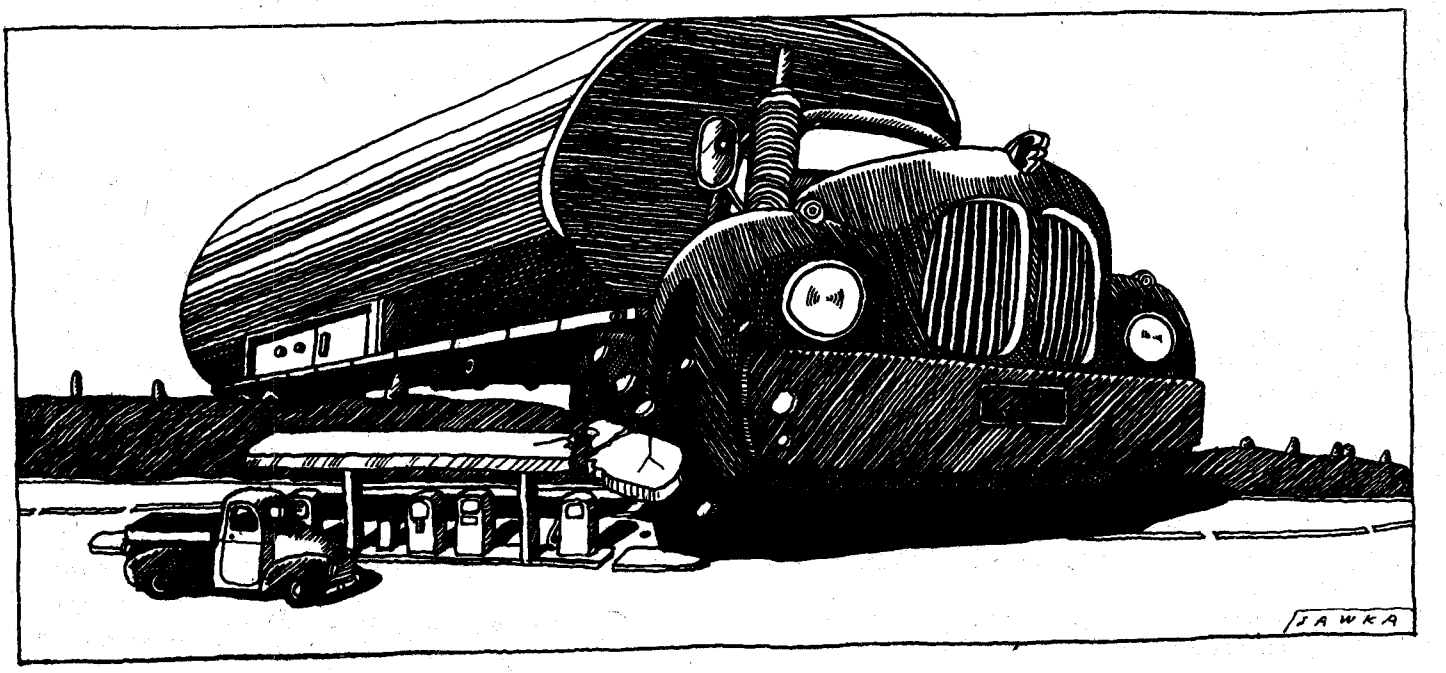
The failure of the real price of gasoline to rise sufficiently to offset mounting refinery costs slashed the majors' profits. After 1974, profits for the major international oil companies plummeted. By 1977, Gulf's profits had slipped from 15 to 9 percent; Exxon's, from 16 to 10 percent; Mobil's, from 14 to 10 percent, and Texaco's, from 15 to 8 percent. While 1974 profits were at record level, 1977 profits were substantially below what the oil companies thought they should be.

But the best measures of profits lost by the major oil companies because of price competition from the unbranded independents are the "bank" costs accumulated by the majors. Under the gasoline regulations, refiners are permitted to hold in a fictitious "bank" any costs incurred in manufacturing gas which cannot be passed along to the consumer because retail prices are too low. These costs are "banked" until retail prices rise in the future, at which time the refiners are able to pass the costs through. The Department of Energy data show that banked gasoline costs for the top twenty-nine refiners rose steadily from $242 million in January 1976 to an all-time peak of $1.265 billion in February 1978. With an extra $1 billion tied up, the major oil companies decided something had to be done.

What they did was reduce gasoline production. Throughout the first seven months of 1978, U.S. refineries operated well below the average rate of the previous two years. This underutilization of capacity assured that a significant amount of gasoline would not be manufactured. The staff of the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations calculated that production was cut back by between 163,000 and 578,000 barrels per day. This curtailment of gasoline production continued (except for one month—May) well into the driving season. Over the first six months of 1978, the input of crude oil into the refineries was almost 5 percent lower than the average input for the same periods in the previous two years. The underutilization of refinery capacity could not be blamed on a shortage of crude oil. The nation's crude inventories stood at historic highs. Nor was it attributable to a decline in the demand. The demand for gasoline during the first seven months of the year rose a predictable 3.1 percent. The reason for the reduction in the manufacture of gasoline lies elsewhere—in a deliberate attempt by Big Oil to strangle the independents.

To meet motorists' needs, the oil companies withdrew gasoline from inventory to an extraordinary degree. The drawdown, which Prof. Fred Allvine of the Georgia Institute of Technology dubbed the "Big Dipper," resulted in a fall in gasoline stocks from a historic high of 272 million barrels in January 1978 to a five-year low of 209 million in August of that year. At the same time that they were drawing down inventories, the major oil companies were making massive purchases on the gasoline spot market. According to the *Oil Buyer's Guide*, a New Jersey-based petroleum newsletter, major oil companies moved heavily into the spot market in New York Harbor and the Gulf Coast during April and May; this pushed prices up. As a result, in one year, from May 1, 1978, to April 30, 1979, the spot price of leaded regular gasoline in New York nearly doubled, going from 39 cents a gallon to 76.5 cents.

What this price rise meant was that the unbranded stations could no longer afford to buy gas on the spot market, according to Paul Bloom, counsel to the independents. In order to keep their prices at the pump competitive, they needed a large pool of low-priced gasoline into which they could mix the high-priced spot gasoline; this they didn't have. The majors, on the other hand, did have such a pool. Unable to obtain as much gasoline, the unbranded independents' sales dropped. In October 1978, they sold 160 million gallons less than they had sold the previous October, a 16.7 percent decline. In November, sales fell 181 million gallons, and in December, 178 million gallons. The falloff in



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sales decimated the independents' ranks. By July 1979, 3,000 unbranded independent stations had gone out of business.

Four oil companies who contributed to the heating up of the spot market were Standard Oil Company of Indiana (Amoco), Shell, Sun Oil Company and Mobil. Shell actually reduced the gasoline it manufactured in 1978 by 22,000 barrels per day. But its sales of gasoline increased in 1978, as they had in the previous four years. To close the gap between what it manufactured and what it sold required no biblical miracles. Shell simply increased its purchases of gasoline on the spot market and elsewhere by more than 300 percent—from 15,000 barrels per day in 1977 to 64,000 per day in 1978. After December 1978, Mobil purchased an additional 500,000 barrels of gasoline on the spot market.

The only plausible explanation for Shell's behavior is that the company deliberately restricted its manufacture of gasoline. It did so for two related reasons. First, it wanted to raise its prices in order to pass through "bank" costs. Second, as a consequence, it entered the spot market, where its purchases, in conjunction with purchases of other major oil companies, pushed the spot market price beyond the reach of its principal competitors, the unbranded independents.

The cessation of Iranian oil exports on December 27, 1978, provided the majors with another weapon to use against their competitors. Within thirty to forty days, the major international oil companies began cutting back sales of crude oil to most of the small refiners they served in the United States. These refiners supply the unbranded independents with half of their gasoline. Among those cut back was the National Refinery Cooperative Association's 59,400 barrels-per-day refinery in McPherson, Kansas, which had obtained 40 to 50 percent of its crude oil from two international majors. In January 1979, both firms cut deliveries, using a *force majeure* clause in their contracts, and by April one of the major oil firms stopped shipments entirely.

Lacking crude, these small refiners could not manufacture gasoline and thus could not deliver as much gasoline to the unbranded independents. The unbranded independents, in turn, had less gas to sell. By the end of June 1979, the height of the gas shortage, their gasoline sales had declined 764 million gallons, or 15.2 percent from the same period a year earlier.

While they were choking off the small refiners' supplies of crude, the major oil companies' own crude imports were increasing substantially. Thus, whatever crude shortages existed in the United States were borne almost entirely by the small refiners. Crude imports in PADs I through IV (i.e., the United States east of the Rocky Mountains) in the first quarter of 1979 were up 12.8 percent for Exxon, 46.1 percent for Shell, 12 percent for Chevron, 29.7 percent for Gulf and 14.1 percent for Mobil over the same period in 1978, according to the American Petroleum Institute.

These crude imports by the majors have been watched by the Department of Energy's buy/sell analysts charged with seeing that small refiners get enough crude in a shortage. Under the program, the top fifteen oil firms have been forced to sell small refiners some crude—about 80,000 barrels per day. However, the D.O.E. has been hampered in its task by the long lead time of information from the oil companies and by the recalcitrance of the majors, some of whom have sought to block the crude sales in court. Jim Carbone, a buy/sell program analyst at the D.O.E., summed it up: "We got screwed."

The upshot was that the unbranded independents sold approximately 110,000 barrels per day less than they did in 1978. This constituted 2 percent of the U.S. demand, or about one-quarter of the gasoline shortfall during the crisis. And what happened to the crude denied to the small refiners by the majors? Big Oil simply added it to its increasingly ample stocks during the first half of the year. By June, even then-Energy Secretary James Schlesinger was compelled to call the major oil companies' abundant crude stocks "distressing" and "disturbing." He ordered them to sell more crude to other refiners, but by then the shortage was at its peak and the damage had been done.

The shortage passed at the end of last summer but all the repercussions from the gas crisis have not been felt. The Department of Energy's Office of Special Counsel has completed but not released an extensive audit of the top thirty-five oil companies, and the House Subcommittee on Energy and Power has been looking into the Department of Energy's handling of the crisis. Speaking for independent gas dealers, Jack Blum has already reached his verdict: the D.O.E. did a "miserable job." Blum says bluntly: "The D.O.E. has abandoned its legislative commitment to keep the unbranded stations as a viable class. D.O.E. has behaved as if it wants to put them out of business." Thousands of former independent gasoline dealers couldn't agree more. □

Iran's War of Words Against Saudi Arabia

PETER A. ISEMAN

While the ordeal of the hostages and the health of the Shah have dominated the news emanating from the Persian Gulf, two important political developments in the region have been overlooked and unreported here—namely, new Shiite disturbances in the oil-producing Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and Iranian efforts to inflame these tensions, disrupt production and subvert the Saudi regime.

According to authoritative and reliable Saudi, American and British sources and a report later published in *The Financial Times* of March 12, handbills and leaflets began appearing in Qatif and other Shiite towns in northeastern

Peter A. Iseman is an Arabist and a contributing editor of Harper's. *He recently received the Overseas Press Club's Hemingway Award for his writing on Saudi Arabia. His book* The Arabians *will be published by Harper & Row.*

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Saudi Arabia in early January of this year. The broadsides were printed in Iran and urged the minority Shiites of Qatif to oppose Saudi royal authority. Then, on February 1, the first anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's return from exile, the Friday sermon in Qatif's main Shiite mosque incited a mob to attack the town's *souk*, or central market area. A branch of the Saudi-British bank was damaged and the municipal electricity office was burned, along with an estimated fifty buses and automobiles. Saudi Government officials and American executives of the Arabian American Oil Company downplay the disturbances and deny any casualties, but senior Saudis at Aramco, several shopkeepers in Qatif and *The Financial Times* have all placed the number of fatalities at four.

Following the February 1 incident in Qatif, Radio Teheran's short-wave Arabic channel ("The Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran") has beamed a daily escalating series of propaganda attacks against the Saudi state, bitter diatribes about the behavior of particular princes, and specific summons to the Shiites to take up arms and rebel. Such radio broadcasts have always played a very special role in the flux and reflux of Middle Eastern politics, both in shaping listeners' sentiments and inciting riots when they occur. The following are excerpts from broadcasts monitored in London and translated by the BBC:

> *2030 GMT, 8 March:* The Saudi authorities are carrying out the same treacherous role that the deposed Shah carried out in Iran. . . . The ruling regime in Saudi Arabia wears Muslim clothing, but inwardly represents the U.S. body, mind, and terrorism. . . . Funds are robbed from the people and squandered . . . for the luxurious, frivolous, and shameless way of life of the Saudi royal family and its entourage. . . .

The broadcast concludes with a detailed denunciation of

> gambling, and drinking parties and shameless dancing and orgies. . . . On the occasion of his daughter's third birthday, Prince Turki Bin Abdel-Aziz and his wife gave a dinner dance at the Geneva Intercontinental. . . . The party continued until 5 A.M. . . . Najwa Fu'ad danced while two orchestras accompanied her. A *third* orchestra . . . was not able to perform for lack of time. . . . *The guests were told to attend with their wives.* . . .
>
> Would it be surprising if people follow the path of the revolution, resort to violence, and continue their struggle to regain their rights and resources?

Another broadcast:

> *1010 GMT, 14 March:* In the name of God, the defender of the oppressed and the scourge of tyrants, kings despoil a country when they enter it and make the noblest of the people the meanest; thus do they behave [Koranic verse]. . . .
>
> Revolutionary masses, heroic people in Qatif . . . [resist] the Government from the deserts where there is neither education, awareness nor culture. . . . Resist your oppressive enemies in the following ways: (*1*) Continue writing slogans opposing the regime and its guards on walls, cars, and particularly government establishments. (*2*) Distribute revolutionary leaflets and . . . encourage citizens to resist and stand fast. (*3*) Challenge the authorities' forces by directing blows at them. Where are the arms? . . . Where are the Molotov cocktails prepared even by women and children? Where are the iron bars, staves, and stones?

Finally, on April 4, Iranian state radio broadcast an explicit threat to disrupt oil production and deny oil supplies to the West. Hojatolislam Ali Khameinei, a prominent cleric who is a member of Iran's ruling Revolutionary Council, warned in his Friday sermon that by fomenting Shiite troubles in the oilfields "we will make the oil *haram* [forbidden by Islamic law] . . . in all the Persian Gulf."

Since World War II, when American interests first became significantly involved in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf, we have tended to misgauge developing disputes, and to react alternately with apathy or alarm. Today's prevailing notions—that oil wealth and Islamic fundamentalism don't mix, that instability spreads by contact and infection, that Saudi Arabia is destined to become what the April *Reader's Digest* calls "The Next Iran"—are also misguided. In fact, Iran and Saudi Arabia have always been much more divided by their differences—religious, tribal, historical, cultural and political—than they were united by any similarities apparent in the West. The Iranians regard the Saudis as Bedouin *arrivistes* and Wahhabi fanatics; the Saudis regard the Iranians as half-breeds and heretics, and distrust between them runs very deep.

An invasion or major military moves against Saudi Arabia are quite unlikely, in view of the disarray of Iran's armed forces and the distance across the Gulf. But as long as the Khomeini regime doubts the loyalty of the Arabs living in Iran's own oil province of Khuzistan, more subtle attempts to subvert the Saudis should come as small surprise. Long borders, few people and very modest military forces make the Saudis and their oil facilities quite vulnerable to such threats. Indeed, the flow of oil is easily disrupted. In 1966 the pipeline across Arabia to the Mediterranean was ruptured and closed down by a single Syrian bulldozer, and in 1977 two accidental explosions near the great Abqaiq oilfield cut production for six weeks. Today, pipelines bearing 97 percent of Saudi oil converge on a single refining and shipping complex at Ras Tanura. Sabotage there or at other key sites in the oilfields would, of course, be an economic nightmare for the West.

A majority of the Saudis working in oil production, and 65 percent of workers at the Ras Tanura complex, are Eastern Province Shiites, who retain ancestral and religious links to the Shiite societies of Iraq and Iran. Comprising about 5 percent of the total native Saudi population, the Eastern Province Shiites are a disliked and disaffected minority in the heartland of Sunni Islam. The February incident in Qatif was just the most recent ebullition of an age-old political and religious rift. In 1865 a British explorer observed that life in Qatif was considered "a slow mode of killing by marsh fever." The Shiites "are disloyal in spirit, and only await their opportunity . . . it is simply the power of the sword which maintains the Wahhabi creed dominant."

Whatever security measures the Saudis may take, stirring up the Shiites will be an easy game for the Iranians until Saudi rulers begin to redress their grievances. A few savvy and candid princes like Turki al Feisal, the Chief of Saudi Intelligence, admit privately that the Shiites have shared une-

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ARC OF INSTABILITY: REVOLUTION AND CONFRONTATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

A symposium sponsored by *The Nation*, WBAI Radio,
The New School for Social Research & the DISARM Education Fund

Saturday, April 19, 1980
Wollman Hall
New School for Social Research
66 West 12th Street (between 5th and 6th Avenues)
New York, New York

Opening Remarks: 10 A.M.
Chair: Blair Clark, Contributing Editor, *The Nation*.

Panel I: Arabia and the Arab World: Instability and Ferment in the 1980s—10:15-11:35 A.M.

Edward Said, *Author of* Orientalism *and* The Question of Palestine, *Professor of English Literature, Columbia University.*

Herman Eilts, *Former U.S. Ambassador to Egypt and currently University Professor of International Relations at Boston University.*

Peter A. Iseman, *An Arabist and Contributing Editor of* Harper's *magazine and recent recipient of the Overseas Press Club's Hemingway Award for his writing on Saudi Arabia. His book* The Arabians *will be published by Harper & Row.*

Samih Farsoun, *Professor of Sociology, American University. He is the author of numerous articles on the Middle East in* Monthly Review, MERIP Reports *(the Middle East Research and Information Project) and other journals. He recently returned from a trip through the Near East.*

Panel II: Revolutionary Iran—11:45 A.M.-1:05 P.M.

Thomas Ricks, *Professor of History, Georgetown University, Editor of* Ripeh, *a journal of Iranian political economy and history. Professor Ricks has been a frequent visitor to postrevolutionary Iran.*

Ramsey Clark, *Former U.S. Attorney General and author, who has visited Iran frequently in the last year.*

Elaine Baly, *Freelance journalist who recently returned from two months in Iran.*

Mangol Bayat, *Assistant Professor of History at Harvard University, a contributor to the* International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies *and other journals. She is the author of the forthcoming book* Mysticism and Dissent; Socio-Religious Thought in Qajar Iran.

(25 minute break from 1:05-1:30)

Panel III: The Politics of Oil Dependency—1:30-2:50 P.M.

James Abourezk, *Former Senator from South Dakota and currently a practicing attorney in Washington, D.C.*

Joe Stork, *Editor of* MERIP Reports *(the Middle East Research and Information Project) and author of* The Middle East Energy Crisis.

Jack Blum, *Former Associate Counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and at present a partner in the Washington, D.C., law firm of Blum and Nash.*

Panel IV: The Afghanistan Crisis and Pakistan—3:00-4:20 P.M.

Selig Harrison, *Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; former South Asia correspondent of* The Washington Post; *author of numerous books and articles on South Asia, including* India: The Most Dangerous Decade; American Aid to Pakistan: Case History of a Mistake *and* The Widening Gulf: Asian Nationalism and American Policy. *Mr. Harrison has recently returned from his third visit to the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands in connection with a forthcoming Carnegie Endowment book on the impact of a Communist Afghanistan on Pakistan and Iran.*

Lawrence Lifschultz, *Former South Asia correspondent of the* Far Eastern Economic Review *and author of* Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution.

Aijaz Ahmad, *Associate Professor of English, Rutgers University and a founding member of the Organization of Progressive Pakistanis.*

Panel V: The Carter Doctrine Scrutinized—4:30-6:00 P.M.

Moderator: David Fromkin, *New York attorney and author whose essay, "The Great Game in Asia," appears in the April 1980 issue of* Foreign Affairs.

Frances FitzGerald, *Author of* Fire in the Lake *and a member of* The Nation's *Editorial Board.*

James Chace, *Managing Editor,* Foreign Affairs.

Alan Wolfe, *Professor of Sociology, Queens College, a member of* The Nation's *Editorial Board and author of* The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Threat *and other books.*

(The one-day symposium will be broadcast live on WBAI Radio, 99.5 FM.)
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qually in the country's oil wealth, and that the Saudi Government must now make amends for past discrimination. Crown Prince Fahd also voiced a similar view in January, but suggested to an American visitor that few Saudis shared his sentiments and that without consensus, progress would be very slow.

Saudi Arabia is more stable than most Westerners assume, and a small and isolated Shiite minority should not be regarded as a serious threat to Saudi sovereignty. Saudi rulers always prefer inaction to disunity, but to delay on overdue reforms for the Shiites is to give unnecessary hostages to fortune. The West's dependence on Arabian oil is now deeply embedded, and will remain so at least until the end of this century. Renewed disturbances and tension would increase political pressure to cut back the level of oil production in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. This in turn would tighten world oil supplies and probably trigger another sharp upsurge of oil prices. An actual attack, sabotage, or even a serious political incident could interrupt oil supplies and cause widespread uncertainty and severe economic disruption. "Oilfields are extremely difficult to defend," Kuwait's Oil Minister remarked recently, "and, once attacked, are extremely difficult to operate afterward." □

T.M.I.

(Continued From Front Cover)

lishment told them that nuclear power was safe, cheap, efficient and reliable. Today, they know better. That faith has been shattered. They have been frightened. They have been lied to time and again. They are paying—financially and otherwise—for the accident. And they are angry.

Their fury reached a crescendo on the evening of March 21, when more than 500 people—of which I was one—managed to squeeze into Middletown's Victory Fire Hall while another 200 milled outside, clamoring to get in. Middletown (population 15,000) is on the east side of the Susquehanna River, right across the river from T.M.I. and six miles south of Harrisburg, the state capital.

Facing the crowd from behind a long table were officials of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They had come to explain why radioactive elements should be released from the plant and how it should be done. But the people were not there to ask questions and listen to answers. They were there to voice their outrage over the accident and its aftermath. And what they had to say was more or less summed up by an exasperated middle-aged woman who cried out, "Words can't express how angry we are!" and a young father who accused the N.R.C. and utility officials of "using the very air that our kids breathe as a radioactive disposal."

Officials from the N.R.C. and Metropolitan Edison Company, which is a half-owner of the plant and its operator, have been arguing that it is necessary to vent the radioactive krypton gas that escaped from the reactor vessel into the large steel and concrete containment building that surrounds it. As R. C. Arnold, senior vice president of Met Ed, puts it, "The ultimate safe condition for the reactor . . . requires decontamination and removal of the nuclear fuel." This will require extensive cleanup operations, but workers cannot approach the reactor until deadly radioactive isotopes have been removed from the containment building. And the N.R.C. and Met Ed contend that the probability of a meltdown occurring will continue to increase unless some of the damage is repaired and the partially melted fuel core removed.

Supposedly, there are four ways to remove the krypton 85. Three of them would, in one way or another, capture the radioactive gas without releasing it into the atmosphere. But Met Ed and the N.R.C. contend that these methods would take too long. They want to vent the gas all at once in what Arnold calls an "atmospheric purge," which, he says, "can be done with no significant exposure either to the general population or the site." He asserts that "the purge can meet all technical specifications and N.R.C. radiological criteria."

But this is precisely the sore point with the Middletowners. They do not trust the utility or the Federal Government—in particular, its standards governing the amount of radiation that people can supposedly be exposed to without undue risk of harm. By now, most people in the area are acutely aware that exposure to radiation, no matter how low, can trigger disease and damage the genes. As one woman in the crowd shouted out, "Why should we trust you when you've already made such colossal blunders!"

The people at the meeting were also suspicious that the utility, which has had almost a year in which to plan for the removal of the gas, has always wanted to vent the krypton rather than capture it and store it. Therefore, when members of the N.R.C. tried to justify the immediate venting of the krypton 85, they were greeted, time and again, by boos and derisive cries of "Money! Money! Money!"—the implication being that the utility has consistently sought the cheapest, rather than the safest, route in regard to the T.M.I. plant.

To John T. Collins, the top N.R.C. official at T.M.I., the issue is simple: "Is it more preferable," he rhetorically asked the crowd, "to have a controlled release or an uncontrolled one?" He later said, "It is not possible to walk away from the reactor. Until the core is removed, there is always a danger of a meltdown."

The anxiety of people who live near T.M.I. has been heightened by reports that an abnormally high number of infants in three counties near the crippled nuclear plant were born with serious thyroid problems after the accident. This has been coupled with widespread reports and rumors of stillborn and mongoloid births in the area and unnerving accounts of animals who have suffered birth defects and dis- [illegible] symptoms that could have been caused by

McKinley C. Olson is a Chicago-based writer and editor and author of Unacceptable Risk *(uranium books). While a repo[illegible] York (Pennsylvania) Gazette and Daily, he co[illegible] groundbreaking ceremony for the Three Mile Island nuclear plant and its subsequent development.*

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radiation. Several nurses at the Middletown meeting, one of them an expectant mother, told the N.R.C. that there has been an abnormal increase in patients in the area who have suffered sore throats, pneumonia, sinus problems and lesions of the mouth and throat. People have been told that exposure to radiation can make them more susceptible to infection because it depresses the functioning of the human immunity system.

One of the most revealing moments at the meeting came when a middle-aged woman with a bouffant hairdo stood behind a microphone in the center of the Middletown fire hall to tell her story. She said that her home is 700 feet from the cooling towers at T.M.I. She raises toy poodles there for a living. Now, the fifteen years of hard work she has put into her business is about to go down the drain. "One dog was born without eyes in its sockets [after the accident]," she said. "Another dog was born with cancer of the thyroid. Now I'm afraid to breed them. I don't know if they're going to be born with only two legs, blind, or what." The woman said she couldn't afford to leave her home without assistance from the government. "I called them [the N.R.C.] on the phone and asked them if they could send a trailer to evacuate me and my dogs if they vent the gas. They said they would get back to me," she said. "That was weeks ago—and I'm still waiting for them to call." She said she asked her veterinarian what to do when radiation was escaping from the plant. She was advised to keep her dogs indoors for at least three days after the radiation release. "But it was hard to keep them inside," she said. "So I put up my American flag on the front lawn so I could see which way the wind was blowing. I got my toy poodles in and out for a minute when I could see that the wind was blowing the opposite way." I was reminded of the line in a Bob Dylan song: "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows!"

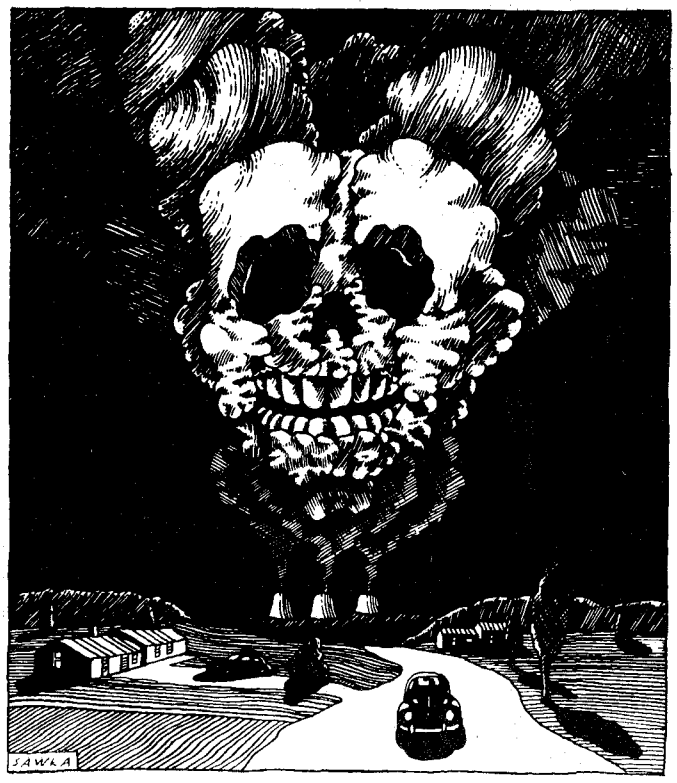
There is also the possibility, according to Dr. Edward Martell, who is an environmental radiochemist with the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, and one of the most knowledgeable authorities in the country on low-level radiation, that other elements could be released from the containment building along with the krypton 85—among them iodine 129 (a long-lived cousin of iodine 131, which has a half-life of eight days), carbon 14 and tritium, a form of heavy hydrogen. Iodine 129 can accumulate in dairy products and wind up in the thyroid. Carbon 14 and tritium can be inhaled. They can also collect in food and drinking water. Once inside the body, they can be assimilated into its organic molecules, according to Martell. As these radioactive isotopes decay, they release beta rays, which can shatter molecular bonds.

"Are they testing for what else—in addition to krypton 85—is being released?" Martell asked when I talked with him on the phone from Pennsylvania. The literature handed out by the state and Federal governments claims that they are, and that these poisons would be trapped by charcoal filters if the krypton gas is released. But when I asked Dr. A. Bertrand Brill, a physician with the N.R.C. at the Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island, about this at the Middletown meeting, he said Martell's questions were "very interesting," but that he couldn't answer them. So he referred me to another member of the N.R.C. in the fire hall, who, Dr. Brill said, would be able to answer my questions. He turned out to be a nuclear engineer—and he didn't know either. Which should make us suspicious. Today we know that most of the radioactive monitors in use at T.M.I. during the accident were capable only of recording the amount of gamma radiation (like that in rays from the sun, and similar to X-rays) in the area, but not the full spectrum of beta and alpha radiation (which, although less penetrating, can attack human cells with devastating effects if it gets inside the body along with particles of dust, foods and liquids). Which means we will never know how much radiation people were exposed to because of the accident. However, you wouldn't know this from the comment of one member of the N.R.C. at Middletown, who philosophically suggested that some good might come of the accident in that it could "increase our knowledge about cancer and help lead to its cure."

Remarks like this drove the crowd wild. The hall, throughout the meeting, resounded with cries of, "You're being too analytical. . . . It's our bodies. . . . Go away and leave us in peace. . . . Why should we have to pay for your mistake with our lives and our money. . . . I don't want any more of my tax money going to a bureaucracy like the N.R.C."

Obviously, as has been widely reported, these people are under a great deal of stress. "Isn't it true," one man at the meeting asked, "that stress, fear and anxiety can also shorten our lives, just as much as cancer?" And one woman exclaimed, "It's just too much for everyone. We can't take it anymore."

It is this kind of sentiment that makes it unlikely that Met



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Ed and the N.R.C. will ever be able to generate electricity again from a reactor at T.M.I., although obviously the utility and the N.R.C. would like to reactivate the undamaged Unit 1 at the site. As the N.R.C. concedes, there are enough people in the area who are now so violently opposed to nuclear power that it would take an armed force to operate the plant again, and even this might not be enough to protect it.

As might be expected, poll-taking has become a major activity in the area. A year after the accident, the polls reveal that while people are divided as to whether the nation needs nuclear power, and should use it, a good 70 percent of the people who have been affected by the accident are opposed to the start-up of any reactor on T.M.I. As reporter David Osterhaut of *The Lancaster New Era* put it, "People around here are very concerned about the cumulative effects of radiation." Lancaster, a city of more than 60,000 people in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch Country, is on the east side of the Susquehanna River, sixteen miles south of T.M.I., and draws its drinking water from the river. The people in Lancaster are opposed to the discharge of radioactive water from the plant into the river, and the city has filed a suit to prevent this from happening.

"There is this uncertainty around here," says Osterhaut, a young man with a wife and small child, who has been covering events at T.M.I. since the accident began. "This fear of the unknown. The fear of how radiation might affect the genes. But the people around here still believe in government. They believe in business. This accident hasn't really shaken that faith." But, he concedes, "the closer you get to the plant, the more concerned they are. And most everyone says, 'Let the utility pay for the accident.' It's already costing Met Ed $13.5 million more a month to buy electricity from the outside for its customers."

To the west, on the other side of the river in York, people are upset about the fact that Met Ed was recently awarded a rate increase by the state Public Utility Commission. They were also incensed by the fact that Met Ed paid a dividend to its stockholders after the accident occurred. One man I talked to, George Kovalak, who is in the local construction business, complained that the electric bills for his home are now about $20 a month higher than they were at the time of the accident, and he warned, "People aren't going to sit around and take this forever."

From York I went to Harrisburg to talk to people in state government. But first I stopped off at the Harrisburg headquarters of the March 28th Coalition, an organization of groups and individuals planning events to commemorate the accident at T.M.I. Jeanne Crumley, who lives in Summerdale, Pennsylvania, was among the people who were there. She told me that she and her husband have a summer cottage on Beech Island, only a few hundred yards away from T.M.I. Mrs. Crumley says she has been "scarred" by the accident and that she now somehow feels "violated" by it. Before the accident, she and her family lived for many years in a home in the area. She said she loved to work in her garden. The house was on a busy street, which never bothered her—until the accident at T.M.I. "After the accident, I couldn't take the noise anymore. So we had to move to a place where it's more quiet," she said, adding, "I feel very depressed."

One of the people I talked to at the state capital was Charles Bacas, the chief of staff for Representative James Manderino, the Democratic whip in the state House. Bacas, a former newspaper reporter and a longtime critic of nuclear power who lives with his family in York, had this to say about the accident. "In the beginning," he said, "there was a widespread suspicion here that Met Ed wanted to declare bankruptcy, but that the nuclear establishment in the country rallied around Met Ed and talked 'em out of it because they were afraid that the ripple effect of a nuclear bankruptcy would have a devastating effect on the industry. Today, that line has changed. Now we're being led to believe that nuclear power is O.K.—that it's only Met Ed that's the exception to the rule. In other words, that it's not the fault of the technology, but only of Met Ed—its operators, its equipment, and so forth."

Bacas, among others in Harrisburg, feels that it might be only a matter of time now before Met Ed declares bankruptcy. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of General Public Utilities Corporation, which also has Jersey Central Power and Light in Morristown, New Jersey, and the Pennsylvania Electric Company in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. "Declaring bankruptcy would be like chopping off an arm to save the rest of the corporate body from cancer," Bacas said.

Met Ed has already spent more than $500 million on the aftermath of the accident. Much of this sum has been covered by insurance, but that is about exhausted. From here on in the costs will have to be met by the utility, the ratepayers, or both. This would require more rate increases, which Met Ed will find increasingly difficult to justify if it is not producing electricity from T.M.I. And using General Public Utilities Corporation funds in an attempt to cope with a potential no-win financial disaster that could run into the billions of dollars is not the kind of prospect that warms the corporate heart.

If Met Ed bows out, it would leave the taxpayers with a potentially dangerous $7 billion nuclear albatross. For the N.R.C. will be stuck with the job of trying to clean up the radioactive mess, using the general public's money to do it. And ratepayers in the area are going to continue to pay through the nose to bring electricity in from the outside to meet their needs. For them, nuclear power has hardly lived up to the glowing promises of safe, cheap, efficient, reliable energy.

The President's Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island concluded that the accident there was "eventually inevitable" and that it could happen again—near your home, and mine, wherever there's a nuclear reactor plant. And we know that it is hardly in the public interest for the Government to place a $560 million ceiling—as set down in the Price-Anderson Act, enacted by the Congress in 1957 to protect the nuclear industry—on the industry's liability for a single nuclear power plant accident that, as T.M.I. clearly demonstrates, will surely cost billions. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Hypocrites You Always Have With You

KURT VONNEGUT

I am enchanted by the Sermon on the Mount. Being merciful, it seems to me, is the only good idea we have received so far. Perhaps we will get another idea that good by and by—and then we will have two good ideas. What might that second good idea be? I don't know. How could I know? I will make a wild guess that it will come from music somehow. I have often wondered what music is and why we love it so. It may be that music is that second good idea's being born.

I choose as my text the first eight verses of John 12, which deal not with Palm Sunday but with the night before—with Palm Sunday Eve, with what we might call "Spikenard Saturday." I hope that will be close enough to Palm Sunday to leave you more or less satisfied. I asked an Episcopalian priest the other day what I should say to you about Palm Sunday itself. She told me to say that it was a brilliant satire on pomp and circumstance and high honors in this world. So I tell you that.

The priest was Carol Anderson, who sold her physical church in order that her spiritual parish might survive.

Now, as to the verses about Palm Sunday Eve: I choose them because Jesus says something in the eighth verse which many people I have known have taken as proof that Jesus himself occasionally got sick and tired of people who needed mercy all the time. I read from the Revised Standard Bible rather than the King James, because it is easier for me to understand. Also, I will argue afterward that Jesus was only joking, and it is impossible to joke in King James English. The funniest joke in the world, if told in King James English, is doomed to sound like Charlton Heston.

I read:

> Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him supper; Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those at table with him.
>
> Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.
>
> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and, as he had the money box, he used to take what was put into it.
>
> Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

Thus ends the reading, and, although I have promised a joke, there is not much of a chuckle in there anywhere. The reading, in fact, ends with at least two quite depressing implications: That Jesus could be a touch self-pitying, and that he was, with his mission to Earth about to end, at least momentarily sick and tired of hearing about the poor.

The King James version of the last verse, by the way, is almost identical: " 'For the poor always ye have with you; but you do not always have me.' "

Whatever it was that Jesus really said to Judas was said in Aramaic, of course —and has come to us through Hebrew and Greek and Latin and archaic English. Maybe he only said something a lot like, "The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." Perhaps a little something has been lost in translation. And let us remember, too, that in translations jokes are commonly the first things to go.

I would like to recapture what has been lost. Why? Because I, as a Christ-worshipping agnostic, have seen so much un-Christian impatience with the poor encouraged by the quotation "For the poor always ye have with you."

I am speaking mainly of my youth in Indianapolis, Indiana. No matter where I am and how old I become, I still speak of almost nothing but my youth in Indianapolis, Indiana. Whenever anybody out that way began to worry a lot about the poor people when I was young, some eminently respectable Hoosier, possibly an uncle or an aunt, would say that Jesus himself had given up on doing much about the poor. He or she would paraphrase John 12, verse 8: "The poor people are hopeless. We'll always be stuck with them."

The general company was then free to say that the poor were hopeless because they were so lazy or dumb, that they drank too much and had too many children and kept coal in the bathtub, and so on. Somebody was likely to quote Kin Hubbard, the Hoosier humorist, who said that he knew a man who was so poor that he owned twenty-two dogs. And so on.

If those Hoosiers were still alive, which they are not, I would tell them now that Jesus was only joking, and that he was not even thinking much about the poor.

I would tell them, too, what I don't have to tell this particular congregation, that jokes can be noble. Laughs are exactly as honorable as tears. Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion, to the futility of thinking and striving anymore. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning-up to do afterward—and since I can start thinking and striving again that much sooner.

All right:

It is the evening before Palm Sunday. Jesus is frustrated and exhausted. He knows that one of his closest associates will soon betray him for money—and that he is going to be mocked and tortured and killed. He is going to feel all that a mortal feels when he dies in convulsions on the cross. His visit among us is almost over—but life must still go on for just a little while.

It is again suppertime.

His male companions for supper are themselves a mockery. One is Judas, who will betray him. The other is Lazarus, who has recently been dead for four days. Lazarus was so dead that he stunk, the Bible says. Lazarus is surely dazed, and not much of a conversationalist—and not necessarily grateful, either, to be alive again. It is a very

Kurt Vonnegut's most recent novel is Jailbird *(Delacorte). He delivered this sermon at St. Clement's Episcopal Church, New York City, on Palm Sunday, March 30, 1980.*

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mixed blessing to be brought back from the dead.

If I had read a little further, we would have learned that there is a crowd outside, crazy to see Lazarus, not Jesus. Lazarus is the man of the hour as far as the crowd is concerned.

Trust a crowd to look at the wrong end of a miracle every time.

There are two sisters of Lazarus there—Martha and Mary. They, at least, are sympathetic and imaginatively helpful. Mary begins to massage and perfume the feet of Jesus Christ with an ointment made from the spikenard plant. Jesus has the bones of a man and is clothed in the flesh of a man—so it must feel awfully nice, what Mary is doing to his feet. Would it be heretical of us to suppose that Jesus closes his eyes?

This is too much for that envious hypocrite Judas, who says, trying to be more Catholic than the Pope: "Hey—this is very un-Christian. Instead of wasting that stuff on your feet, we should have sold it and given the money to the poor people."

To which Jesus replies in Aramaic: "Judas, don't worry about it. There will still be plenty of poor people left long after I'm gone."

This is about what Mark Twain or Abraham Lincoln would have said under similar circumstances.

If Jesus did in fact say that, it is a divine black joke, well suited to the occasion. It says everything about hypocrisy and nothing about the poor. It is a Christian joke, which allows Jesus to remain civil to Judas, but to chide him about his hypocrisy all the same.

"Judas, don't worry about it. There will still be plenty of poor people left long after I'm gone."

Shall I regarble it for you? "The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

My own translation does no violence to the words in the Bible. I have changed their order some, not merely to make them into the joke the situation calls for but to harmonize them, too, with the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount suggests a mercifulness that can never waver or fade.

This has no doubt been a silly sermon. I am sure you do not mind. People don't come to church for preachments, of course, but to daydream about God.

I thank you for your sweetly faked attention. □

Dharma Demagogy

ELIOT WEINBERGER

THE PARTY: A Chronological Perspective on a Confrontation at a Buddhist Seminary. *Prepared and written by Members of the Investigative Poetry Group under the direction of Ed Sanders. Poetry, Crime and Culture Press. Box 729. Woodstock, New York. 178 pp.*

THE GREAT NAROPA POETRY WARS. *By Tom Clark. Cadmus Editions. Box 4725. Santa Barbara, California. 87 pp. $5.*

The tale of the Spiritual Leader and his Organization may be the most familiar story of the last decade, but the version presented in these two books is unique and disturbing. For the Leader here is the Tibetan, Chogyam Trungpa; his chief apologist is Allen Ginsberg; his followers, and those who have taught under his auspices at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, include many of the best writers, artists, composers and academics in the land. Whereas intellectuals could shrug off Jim Jones, Sun Myung Moon and the whole crackpot pantheon as cults appealing only to dopes and the doped, the parallel tales of Trungpa and Ginsberg cannot be ignored. What may be happening in Boulder, though still in embryonic form, is an Oriental redecoration of homegrown American demagogy: the Dharma Bums playing *It Can't Happen Here.*

Trungpa, whatever his excesses, is no imposter. His lineage is that of the Kagyupa and Karmapa orders, both founded by disciples of the great Milarepa (1040-1123) to carry on the Nyingmapa tradition. (The Nyingmapa is the "ancient" or "unreformed" school, which emphasizes "action," principally meditation. Its complement is the Gelukpa or "reformed" school, stressing scholarship, now the dominant order and headed by the Dalai Lama.) Under the system of succession by reincarnation, Chogyam Trungpa, born (or rather reborn) in 1938, was discovered as an infant to be the eleventh incarnation of one Trungpa Tulku. From age 2 he was raised to be the Supreme Abbot of the Surmang monasteries in Eastern Tibet.

Following the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959, Trungpa fled to India and later to England to study at Oxford. After graduation he founded in Scotland the first Tibetan Buddhist meditation center in the West, Samye-Ling. Here was his first encounter with American poetry, in the figure of Robert Bly, who came to study and helped Trungpa edit his lectures for English publication. Trungpa became the first Tibetan to obtain British citizenship (which he retains) and shortly thereafter renounced his monastic vows to marry a wealthy 16-year-old disciple. His peers and disciples were unhappy with a connubial version of the Master's Bliss, and the newlyweds soon left Scotland for—where else?—the United States.

In Vermont in 1970 he founded America's first Tibetan meditation center, Tail of the Tiger, with property and buildings worth $1 million. This was quickly followed by large purchases of land in eight other states, a theater group, a "therapy project" and various publishing ventures which made Trungpa's writings best sellers on the spiritual circuit. In 1973 he inaugurated the Vajradhatu Seminary, three months of intensive retreat at resorts which featured Tibetan-style scenery and Allen Ginsberg among its first students.

Through Ginsberg, Bly and others, Trungpa had become the pet guru of many poets. (He was, after all, Oxford-trained and something of a poet himself.) In 1974, taking advantage of his literary conquests, he founded the Naropa Institute, a parochial but eclectic college whose best-known department was the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, under the leadership of Ginsberg and Anne Waldman. Their aim was a reincarnation in the lineage of Black Mountain and the Bauhaus, and Naropa attracted a galaxy of arts bigwigs—Ashbery, Burroughs, Creeley, Cage, Don Cherry, Baraka, Duncan, Merwin, Rothenberg, Joni Mitchell, among others—many of whom were Ginsberg connections rather than Trungpa disciples.

Trungpa's relations with the superstars seemed, from the beginning, mixed:

Eliot Weinberger is a poet and the editor of Montemora. *His most recent book is a translation of Octavio Paz's* A Draft of Shadows *(New Directions).*

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on the one hand, elation at having the all-stars on his team; on the other, what insiders would call his scorn of the artist's self-involvement and outsiders might term jealousy or fear of eclipse. The first sign of trouble had occurred in 1972, at a benefit reading for Trungpa given by Ginsberg, Bly and Gary Snyder. Trungpa, completely drunk, trashed the event: banging on a gong, interrupting the readings, ridiculing the poets. Bly never forgave him; Snyder thereafter made himself scarce, and only Ginsberg humbly swallowed Trungpa's explanation (Ginsberg: "Your drunken behavior—is this just you, or is this a traditional manner, or what?" Trungpa: "I come from a long line of eccentric Buddhists"), and subsequently defended his master to all and sundry.

The major incident, however, the Lexington and Concord of this controversy, took place in 1975 at a Halloween party at the Vajradhatu Seminary in Snowmass, Colorado. The story has taken on an almost legendary stature, although it is possible to separate the facts from the oral embellishments by reading *The Party*, which devotes about 100 pages to documentation of the event. But it should be remembered that the incident is emblematic, not definitive, and the response to it far more interesting than the episode itself.

Briefly then, the story as presented in these books. In 1975, W. S. Merwin, teaching a summer course at Naropa, asked Trungpa if he and his companion, the Hawaiian poet Dana Naone, could attend the Vajradhatu Seminary in the fall. Though Merwin and Naone were beginners, and the seminary strictly for advanced and favored students (competition for admittance was keen) Trungpa consented—possibly because Merwin was, next to Ginsberg, his choicest poetry catch. At the seminary, Merwin and Naone participated in all the activities, but generally kept to themselves—a source of resentment in a community devoted to the dissolution of the self. After two-thirds of the teachings had been completed, and the "powerful stuff" (Vajrayana, the Tantric teachings) was about to begin, Trungpa declared a costume party for Halloween night.

It was a wild party: Trungpa, smashed as usual, necking with a disciple and leaving teeth marks on her cheek, ordering his guards to strip a 60-year-old woman and carry her around the room, and other merriment. Merwin and Naone, in no mood for bacchanalia, had come and left. Somewhere in his haze the Leader noted the absence of the prize pupils; the guards were asked to summon them. Merwin and Naone replied that they were tired, were going to bed. Trungpa ordered them to appear. Tension escalated. Merwin and Naone, terrified, barricaded their door with furniture. Trungpa demanded the door be broken down. The goons climbed over a balcony and smashed through plate-glass doors; Merwin, though a lifelong pacifist, began slashing wildly with a broken beer bottle. But at the sight of blood (several attackers were seriously hurt) he stopped, and the pair allowed themselves to be taken to the party.

When they confronted him, Trungpa answered their objections by throwing sake in Merwin's face and making remarks to Naone insinuating his displeasure that a fellow Asian would consort with a white man. He then ordered his guards to strip both of them. As Naone screamed for help, a hundred disciples stood and watched in silence. Only one tried to intervene; Trungpa punched him in the face and the guards dragged him out. Finally, the poets stood, naked and huddling, before the Leader. In a pathetic moment, Naone had cried "Call the police!" as if the outside world still existed. (Ginsberg was later to comment: "In the middle of that scene, to yell 'call the police'—do you realize how *vulgar* that was? The Wisdom of the East was being unveiled, and she's going 'call the police!' I mean, shit! Fuck that shit! Strip 'em naked, break down the door!") The next morning Trungpa placed a letter in all the disciples' mailboxes. It is a double-talk classic of mastery and money:

> Dear friends,
>
> In order to present comprehensive communication between the students and myself, I have come to the conclusion that we need to break the ice of our personal concealment. It is time for us all to be honest. If you want to maintain your patterns of hiding your deception, you are invited to leave the seminary before the Vajrayana teachings begin. Since your neurosis is already an open secret, you could be braver in unmasking it. Without commitment to yourself, there is no ground to present the Vajrayana teachings to you. I invite you to be yourself, without trips. I would like to encourage you to make a proper relationship to the coming Vajrayana talks. This requires of you the understanding that we are not fooling each other. Since you are all pretty involved in the teachings, your attempt at deception is a useless hesitation. In order to recognize your personal deceit, you must understand the umbilical cord between you and me. You must offer your neurosis as a feast to celebrate your entrance into the vajra teachings. Those of you who wish to leave will not be given a refund, but your karmic debt will continue as the vividness of your memory cannot be forgotten.
>
> Chogyam Trungpa,
> the Venerable Vajra,
> Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche.

The tale of Merwin, Naone and Trungpa quickly became legend, and its archetypal qualities have kept the legend not only alive in the literary community but perhaps also more vivid than ever, now, five years later. Here was the mad king, the mob beyond the barricaded door, the thugs smashing through the glass, the pacifist turned enraged protector, the triumph of the sinister, the group apathy to violence, and finally—as Robert Duncan has pointed out—the nude heterosexual couple as emblems of resistance. It was the stuff of night-

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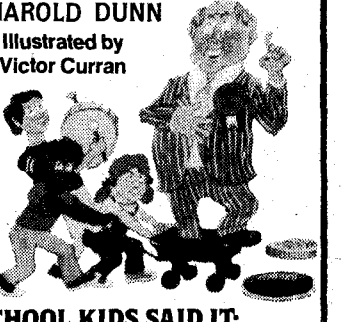

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mares. Trungpa calls his teachings "crazy wisdom"—was it crazy or was it wisdom, a method or madness?

In the literary world, repercussions were felt almost immediately. Robert Bly was telling his reading audiences a characteristically garbled version of the event, and word reached the National Endowment for the Arts, then considering a grant application from the Kerouac School. Ginsberg and Waldman scrambled to disassociate Naropa from the Vajradhatu Seminary, to have the N.E.A. talk to Merwin, Bly, anybody. The application was turned down. Trungpa's private secretary circulated a letter warning disciples of the "enemies of the dharma."

Then, in 1977, Ed Sanders was invited to teach a summer course at Naropa. His subject was "Investigative Poetics," a Sanders invention which proclaims that "poetry should again assume responsibility for the description of history." He asked his class which topic they wished to explore, and of course they chose the Merwin incident. Naropa made no attempt to stop the investigation. The twenty students interviewed some sixty people, not including Trungpa himself, who refused to cooperate. Merwin and Naone, then in France, sent a long letter—their only public comment to date. The final report, *The Party*, is 178 pages long and covers the 1972 Bly-Ginsberg-Snyder reading, various seminary brawls, the Halloween party, Bly's subsequent statements and the N.E.A. rhubarb. It is brilliantly edited, utterly fascinating: the same story told over and over, detail by detail, with contradictions, additions, lacunas and wonderful bits of spiritual Newspeak. It may be the most interesting narrative in years.

In 1978 *The Party* began circulating in *samizdat*, despite various attempts to suppress it. The copy I received had a Xeroxed letter on the first page which reads:

> Dear [blacked out],
> . . . [Blacked out] has asked me to entrust this copy with you. [Paragraph blacked out.] I would also ask that you not mention from whom you received this report. It may be paranoid, but in light of the threats that Clark and Dorn have received, I would rather remain anonymous.
> Sincerely, [Blacked out]

The controversy, though three years old, was intensifying as the report found new readers. The response from the Naropa and Vajradhatu community was entrenchment, fear, petty and serious counterattack and a kind of madness.

Evidence of the hysterical mood then prevalent comes from a source unrelated to the Merwin story. As documented in the July 1979 issue of *Tibetan Review*, it appears that in late November 1978, Karl G. Springer, director for external affairs of Vajradhatu, circulated a letter to all U.S. members claiming that the Dalai Lama was plotting the assassination of the Gyalwa Karmapa (the main man in Trungpa's line) and other high Nyingmapa lamas in an attempt to effect a rapprochement with the Chinese by "de-emphasizing" Buddhism.* The letter orders all of the Dharmadhatu centers (the local branches) to meet immediately to discuss the situation, and to send letters (all with an identical text, supplied by Springer) to the Indian and Sikkimese Governments demanding police protection for the lamas.

Springer was clearly not acting on his own: such a charge could have come only with Trungpa's crazy blessing, if

*This probably needs some translation. Imagine, then, a high-ranking official in the Anglican church, sending a letter to every parish in England stating that the Pope is planning to bump off the Archbishop of Canterbury in order to help the Soviet Union by weakening European Christianity.

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not under his direct orders. After six months of angry denunciations from various lamas, Springer finally half-heartedly apologized. A few months later, the Dalai Lama, on his first visit to the United States, canceled a scheduled stop at Boulder. It is now said that the Springer affair has seriously alienated Trungpa from the Tibetan exile community, but this is difficult to verify.

Hangovers from the party continued through 1979. In February, *Harper's* published "Spiritual Obedience" (the title tells it all) by Peter Marin, a diary of a summer at Naropa, and the first national account of the Merwin story, though without any names. In March, *Boulder Monthly* published an excerpt from the Sanders report, accompanied by Tom Clark's interview with Allen Ginsberg on the incident. (The Naropans formed squads and bought up every copy.) This was followed by a petition, circulated by Bob Callahan of Turtle Island Press, calling for a boycott of Naropa. The petition was a flop: even those who loathed Trungpa refused to attack Ginsberg's baby. According to Callahan, "It was a case of party lines, party loyalty, of not losing gigs or giving up a station."

Flak flew throughout the year, culminating in the publication of the Clark book under review here. The first published history of the controversy, the book is essentially a long magazine article (some thirty pages) followed by forty pages of appendixes: letters, documents, newspaper editorials, and, most important of all, the Ginsberg interview. Unfortunately, Clark writes in wise-guy style, and litters an already sensational story with transparent innuendoes. Alas, it will be all too easy for Naropans to catch Clark on a hundred details, thereby diverting discussion from the serious questions raised by the events and statements chronicled in the book.

Because we don't know, because we like to imagine another civilization as wiser than this pale and plastic swamp, we have invented a spiritual paradise in the Himalayas: a Shangri-La of otherworldliness, of chanting, meditation, telepathy, astral projection. But the true history of Tibet is as violent and depressing as anywhere else: the continual rise and fall of warring monasteries and sects, each connected to a noble family; the forging and breaking of alliances; endless vendettas; holy squanderers supported by a miserable majority of landless serfs—and a few great teachers, struggling against the worldly excesses of their contemporaries. Tibet until 1959 is the mirror of Medieval Europe, its Buddhism a rigid and hierarchical institution whose relation to the teachings of the Gautama corresponds to that between the Medieval papacy and the guru from Nazareth.

Tibetan Buddhism and the Medieval Church: both are defined by the magnificence of their scholarship and art, and the contrast of their legends of exemplary men and the local anecdotes of sex, greed, exploitation and alcoholism. In both cultures, the lusty monk is a stock comic figure among the common people. In both, the advocates of reform are swallowed by the institution. This is the tradition Trungpa comes from. If we ignore the exoticism of his Eastern trappings, we might imagine him as a bishop who walked out of a time warp, discoursing brilliantly on Aquinas and Augustine while peddling papal indulgences.

Furthermore, Trungpa comes from a tradition where the teachings are largely transmitted orally. The heart of the religion then, especially in the "active" Nyingmapa tradition, becomes the relation between master and disciple. The typical Christian tale is of miracles and torture; in Tibet, the stories of the saints usually concern the ordeals imposed by the teacher on his student: impossible and useless tasks, senseless beatings—a kind of physical version of the Zen koan, designed to stop the flow of discursive thought in the disciple's mind, allowing him to project outside of the self. Even debates between lamas of equal rank become a physical combat: early travelers to Tibet were startled by these formal contests where points are made with menacing gestures, foot-stamping, clapping, and where the victor humiliates the loser, sometimes by riding around the room on the loser's back. Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelukpa order in the fourteenth century, characterized these debates as "contemptuous contradiction": the Merwin-Trungpa confrontation, seen with Tibetan eyes, is merely tradition.

But Trungpa is not a wise man in the Rockies with a few students. He has taken an ancient tradition and—having swiftly mastered the Way of America—mass-marketed it. It is at this point that the possibility of using the word *fascism* arises. Merwin, in his letter to the Sanders team, writes eloquently on the topic. It is worth reproducing at length:

> . . . There was then, in the Vajradhatu, and no doubt there still is, a jargon peculiar to the sect, in constant use. It began to flow in at once to accommodate what had happened. "Student-teacher relationship," "teaching device." "Neurosis" and "aggression," and "arrogance," used in special parochial senses. Force directed from on top, for instance, is a teaching device, a sort of divine sanction; infallible. Resistance to it, or any questioning of its aptness is neurosis, and probably aggressive, because it's a "defense of one's territory." Arrogance, despite its dictionary meaning and etymology, apparently can apply to anyone *except* the master, whatever he does. If everything is to be explained away, or swept behind a veil as part of an esoteric "student-teacher relationship," then a great deal depends on how much one can trust the teacher, and the teacher's at-

PRAISE

I roll from the bed mornings
knowing things fade
and renew as they will—

the persistence of mangroves
clinging for soil
to bits of driftwood,
the deliberate trek of mosses
from the Pleistocene
over stone.

Though I remember nothing
from past lives,
they convince me
of something so eternal
it defies memory,
a quiet so deep
that even the murmur of thrushes
intrudes on it,
even love
usurps its tranquility.

I am no longer
a small boy:
I bear loss
with an epiphytic ease—
the air sustains me,
the dust,
the well-intentioned residues
of decay.

If I wake tonight
screaming,
remain still—
When morning comes,
all I will remember
are last night's stars . . .

what they disturb,
what they rectify.

Michael Blumenthal

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titude to power, as it manifests itself.

Personally, I think that it makes a great difference whether "surrender" and "devotion" to another human being is an individual matter, or is made part of the functioning of a group. I think that's been one of the repeated teachings of political history. Trungpa—then, at least—was surrounded by people who were scared to death of him, and he seemed to encourage their feelings of dread, as part of their "surrender" and "devotion" to him. . . .

Anyway, I wasn't using the word "fascism" loosely. An autocratic setup using organized force, group pressures, fear and informants to bring about conformity of attitude and induce "devotion" to an individual seems to me to be fascism, even at a classroom level, or in a street gang. And those who surrender their own judgments, in a group situation (Naropa and Tilopa, by contrast, were *on their own*) *to someone* they're afraid of, aren't to be trusted, in my opinion.

A line should be drawn here between Trungpa and Buddhism: to discuss Buddhist fascism is to explore Trungpa's exploitation of the teachings, rather than the teachings themselves. It is because of this confusion that Kenneth Rexroth, America's greatest Buddhist poet, has remarked that "Trungpa has unquestionably done more harm to Buddhism in the United States than any man living." (He goes on to advise immediate deportation: "One Aleister Crowley was enough for the twentieth century.") The question then remains: why, of the hundreds of Buddhist masters now in the United States, has Trungpa alone so successfully captured some of the best minds of the generation?

One answer is surely apocalyptic yearning: a willful submission to a personal apocalypse as the only response possible to the involuntary submission to global destruction. Many of Trungpa's disciples happily describe him as a monster. Ginsberg, in the interview, typically carries it further: "Anything might happen. We might get taken over and eaten by the Tibetan monsters. All the monsters of the Tibetan Book of the Dead might come out and get everybody to take LSD! Actually that's what's happening. . . . The Pandora's Box of the Bardo Thodol has been opened by the arrival in America of one of the masters of the secrets of the Tibetan Book of the Dead." It is a return to Nietzsche and Spengler: violence as the only catalyst for the restoration of proper order. You can't make a Dharma omelette without cracking an egghead.

It is the open secret of modern American literature that much of our best writing has been written by fascists and anti-Semites and a few outsiders (Jews, blacks, women, homosexuals). But the "postwar" generations could always dismiss the politics of our immediate literary ancestors as misguided and naïve —we of course knew better. And of course we didn't: some of the outward trappings are different, but the old models have held. All of the old nightmares are back in the Ginsberg interview.

For twenty-five years Allen Ginsberg has been the best-known poet in the country, a national emblem, our representative. As Bob Callahan found out from his petition, though many will disagree on specifics with Ginsberg, almost no poet is willing to discredit him. He has stood for the bardic tradition, for vision, for song and for resistance to authority. If Pound and Eliot and the rest are our shameful past, Ginsberg stood for an exemplary and enlightened present. In retrospect, however, he may be seen to be carrying on the aristocratic tradition, for Ginsberg's main activity has been the creation and promotion of elite groups and the condemnation of the masses. "Beat" vs. "square"; "heads" vs. "straights"; "peaceniks" vs. "hard hats" and, to a certain extent, "gay" vs. "straight"—all of these groups, no matter how worthy the cause, depended on a code of behavior and a system of beliefs as rigid as that of their despised counterparts. Now Ginsberg's enemy has become what he calls "the barbarous Western mind," and his need for a ruling elite has found its object in Tibetan theocracy: "So all of a sudden poets are now confronted by the guys who've got the secrets of the Himalayas! . . . This kind of wisdom was always supposed to be secret. Nobody was supposed to know about it except

ASTRONOMICAL: A MARRIAGE

He woke one morning, visionary,
like Copernicus, and told her his sun
no longer revolved around her continents,
that her moon could no longer sway his tides.

That Spring, she continued to water
the begonias, but failed to tie the stems
of the daffodils, which went
to seed, leaving an absence in the backyard
she would look at for years, but never rectify.

One night, he turned to her suggesting
that the world, after all, was perhaps flat,
but when they tried to sail off its edge
they always returned to the same house with its
empty rooms of furniture and photographs.

For years, they lived this way.
He took up ceramics. She ran in the Boston Marathon.
The magnolia continued to flower, but the wind
changed direction, and its fragrance was lost to them.
The neighborhood they lived in was rezoned: commercial.

She began to talk in her sleep, reciting
the names of planets and constellations, billowing
lines from poems he had read to her beneath the aspen.
She compared him to November and longed for the barren sycamore.
He compared her to March and preferred the pasqueflower.

Winters, they walked the ocean in search
of a shooting star. The surf pounded its temporary
quiet, phosphorescence sparkled on the white sands.
His hand shot, in recognition, towards the West—
"There," he whispered, "there."

"Where?," she answered, "where?"

Michael Blumenthal

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the gurus and masters of the world, who were ruling everything from the top of the Himalayas. . . . And now it's all right here."

The masters of the world, ruling everything, knew that all along there has been a secret *political* order to the world. Those of us who had hoped that the romance of fascism and poetry was over had believed, perhaps rightly, that intellectuals would be skeptical of any proclamation of a New Order, of the kind of bizarre utopianism Pound and the others found in Mussolini and Hitler. Instead, fascism has come from the other direction: not the future but the past. An Ancient Order to the world that we never knew existed, and now it's ours!

Ginsberg speaks today of Naropa and Vajradhatu as an "experiment in monarchy." He believes that Trungpa is infallible, that the Merwin incident was not a mistake but a lesson, the meaning of which he has not deciphered. The Ginsberg interview, along with the recently published Pound radio speeches, is surely the most depressing transcript in American letters:

> . . . The poets have a right to shit on anybody *they* want to. You know, the poets have got the divine right of poetry. They go around, you know, commit suicide. Burroughs commits murder, Gregory Corso borrows money from everybody and shoots up drugs for twenty years, but he's "divine Gregory." But poor old Trungpa, who's been suffering since he was 2 years old to teach the dharma, isn't allowed to wave *his* frankfurter! And if he does, the poets get real mad that their territory is being invaded!
>
> And then *I'm* supposed to be like the diplomat poet, defending poetry against those horrible alien gooks with their weird Himalayan practices. And American culture! "How dare you criticize American culture!" Everybody's been criticizing it for twenty years, prophesying the doom of America, how rotten America is. And Burroughs is talking about "democracy, shit! What we need is a new Hitler." Democracy, nothing! They exploded the atom bomb without asking us. Everybody's defending American democracy. American democracy's this thing, this Oothoon. The last civilized refuge of the world —after twenty years of denouncing it as the *pits*! You know, so now it's the 1970s, everyone wants to go back and say, "Oh no, we've got it comfortable. Here are these people invading us with their mind control."

Norman Birnbaum, Blair Clark, Ramsey Clark, Fred Cook, Terrence Des Pres, E.L. Doctorow, Richard Falk, Jules Feiffer, Tom Ferguson & Joel Rogers, Frances FitzGerald, James Goodman & Dorothy Samuels, Philip Green, Christopher Hitchens, Leonard Kriegel, Robert Lekachman, Penny Lernoux, Sanford Levinson, Carey McWilliams, Aryeh Neier, Marcel Ophuls, Nora Sayre, Robert Sherrill, Calvin Trillin, Kurt Vonnegut, Alan Wolfe **write it.**

John Alcorn, Marshall Arisman, Tony Auth, Seymour Chwast, Robert Grossman, Frances Jetter, Ed Koren, David Levine, Lou Myers, Ed Sorel **illustrate it.**

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> . . . So, yes, it is true that Trungpa is questioning the very foundations of American democracy. Absolutely! . . . The whole foundation of American democracy is . . . as full of holes as Swiss Cheese.

Swiss cheese or yak butter, it's unfortunately impossible to leave Trungpa, Ginsberg and the rest fiddling the dials of the planetary spiritual control center, for the Naropa Institute is still with us, now more than ever. It has become the leading arts center in the country; every sensitive college student talks of going there, and the faculty is as impressive as ever. The question, then: is Naropa secular, and should those who doubt Trungpa's infallibility teach there?

Disciples claim that Naropa is not parochial, and is completely separate from the Vajradhatu organization. Naropa is a division of the Nalanda Foundation, and is indeed *legally* separate from Vajradhatu—a common bureaucratic arrangement for tax and grant purposes. However, Trungpa is the president (with veto power) of both organizations and, at the time of the Sanders report, all six directors of Vajradhatu were directors of Nalanda, and all six officers of Nalanda were officers of Vajradhatu. There is no question that Naropa is a Buddhist institution: it is plain in all their brochures and catalogues, and from all reports from students and teachers. Meditation is "highly encouraged" and may soon be required in their new degree program; the administration consists largely of Trungpa disciples, and Trungpa himself has stated that "the purpose of Naropa is, first of all, to provide a vessel for the development of Bodhisattva activity." Naropa therefore may not technically be Vajradhatu, but Naropa is unquestionably Chogyam Trungpa, and to teach there is to demonstrate implicit approval of the Leader. More important, the presence of well-known writers and artists has legitimized Trungpa's activities in the eyes of the world and is a further justification of his experiment in monarchy.

As for Ginsberg, let George Orwell say it: "A writer's political and religious beliefs are not excrescences to be laughed away, but something that will leave their mark even on the smallest detail of his work." As for Trungpa, let Merwin have the last word: "I wouldn't encourage anyone to become a student of his. I wish him well." □

FILMS

ROBERT HATCH

The Tin Drum
The Wicker Man

Before seeing the movie that was made from it, I read Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*. That was perhaps unwise, for the novel is magisterial; it dominates your imagination, colors your point of view, and I now have some difficulty separating the text from the images on the screen. What the film cannot provide is easily stated: it is the language—that Niagara of prose which sweeps history and literature, violence, horror and comedy, landscape, details of dress, furniture and architecture, smells, lusts, fears and childish pleasures into the torrent of images, whereby Grass expresses his loathing of, amusement with and love for his fellow Germans and their Polish neighbors in the years before, during and after Hitler's brief supremacy. Nor can the movie show you that world through the unflinching eyes of Oskar, the monstrous, tiny drummer who was born in full consciousness and who determined at the age of 3 to avoid the pain, and especially the squalor, of adulthood by refusing to grow beyond that age. Instead, it presents the boy himself in the person of David Bennent, a young actor who, under the direction of Volker Schlöndorff, suggests how Oskar must have appeared to others as he observed, evaded and manipulated the turbulent society in which he lived but did not age.

Schlöndorff is known in this country for *The Sudden Fortune of the Poor People of Kombach* and *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*. He says that when he read *The Tin Drum* he felt that from it could be made "a very German fresco . . . enormous, spectacular paintings grouped together by the tiny Oskar." Among other things, *The Tin Drum* is a picaresque novel, and there were more than enough scenes from which to choose: the Christ child as drummer, the ghastly harvest of eels, the storm troopers waltzing to Oskar's beat, the dwarfs' picnic atop the Normandy bunker, the siege of the Danzig post office, the seduction of Maria with fizz powder. The film is a splendid spectacle, but only a sampling of the first two of the novel's three books. It is like watching a slide show of some well-remembered land, the snapshots bringing to mind more than they can show.

In this case they recall Oskar's offhand, deadly wit, his equanimity in the presence of anguish, his instant recognition of the true survivor's main chance. Schlöndorff's Oskar shatters glass with his demonic scream, and one remembers what occasions evoked this protest from Grass's Oskar. I watched the film with admiration and despair—it is so much better than I had expected and yet as inadequate as I had feared.

In addition to Bennent as Oskar, there are Angela Winkler as his mother, Mario Adorf as his "putative" father, Katharina Tahlbach as Maria, Daniel Olbrychski as Jan Bronski, Heinz Bennent as Greff the scoutmaster and Charles Aznavour as Sigismund Markus, in whose toy store there were drums until the Nazis came. I have omitted more members of the excellent cast than I have mentioned—there is not space enough here to name them all, as there was not time on the screen to get beneath the surface of *The Tin Drum*.

An outbreak of science fiction on an island off the west coast of Scotland seemed to me a refreshing idea; so, despite warnings, I went to see *The Wicker Man*. But though it has won a fistful of awards in that category, it does not pass with me for science fiction. Everything that occurs, however improbable, is studiously supported by laws as well-known as Newton's, and an unrestrained enthusiasm for pagan ritual is not science of any sort.

The picture is a whodunit (a child has disappeared), one that takes the familiar form of the pursuer pursued, and as far as plotting goes it is serviceable enough. What works against it as entertainment is a simple-mindedness so insistent that, while enjoying the wild Hebridean landscape, not to mention the priapic exercises of the islanders, one is continually muttering "yes, but" and "hey, wait a minute."

I admit that the picture builds to a very spectacular climax, but, overall, the spectacle of a bunch of refugees from Scottish Presbyterianism running about with antlers on their heads and improvising bawdy verses to highland lullabies is a real challenge to one's suspension of disbelief. Robin Hardy directed a handsome cast in this curiosity. □

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THEATER

HAROLD CLURMAN

Clothes for a Summer Hotel

It would hardly be worthwhile now to add another adverse review to the several which have been written about Tennessee Williams's latest play—a quick failure—*Clothes for a Summer Hotel*. Much more to the point would be an inquiry into what was amiss in a play that was well written, well directed and in its central role very well acted.

That Williams, as others have remarked, provided no special insights into Scott Fitzgerald's relationship with his wife, Zelda, need not have proved a fatal flaw. Immediately recognizable was that history's attraction for Williams. Zelda was an ideal model for another of those delicate women—wounded in their contact with the world—whom he made so memorably affecting in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Orpheus Descending* and others. In all of them, Williams embodied his sense of the bruise which life inflicts on those fragile ones who are unequipped to protect themselves from hurt.

In Zelda, Williams saw a woman of a romantic imagination and sensibility that might have developed into artistic expression, but who happened to be married to a writer who, weak himself, needed her support (amounting to near slavery) in order to make his own work the all-absorbing center of his existence. Scott's fallible ego unwittingly conspired to crush Zelda's spirit: that at least is how Williams interpreted their interdependence. The artist's adored mate became his victim. Zelda, in circumstances very different from those of Williams's other destroyed women, is another portrait from the same gallery.

The proposition might be considered valid enough; the biographical material was sufficiently rich to lend it authenticity. Even the repetition of the material in these various portraits need not have proved an obstacle to another success in emotional or dramatic power. The author's usual clarity, intelligence, fluency, euphony and ironical comic knack for characterization were still present. Why then were we not moved, nor genuinely interested? Because it was his mind that was at work, his mind and will only. There seems to be some disconnection now between Williams's inner self and his creative practice. His craft remains, but the feeling is no longer spontaneous—no longer, that is, inspired by newly refreshed sources of his being.

The tragedy of the woman broken by denial of personal expression has exhausted Williams, who persists in expression when the impulse to express has become merely a professional obligation. Habit and skill have replaced Williams's original compassion and the deep-seated need of his soul. Williams ought to allow himself a period of retirement during which he might discover a new vein. An artist does not require perpetual motion, nor should he yield to the compulsion to go on and on in order to sustain a reputation or to respond to the unwarranted challenge of "What have you done for us lately?"

Everything was said in the first act of his play; the second added no further significant action. There was only an abrasive scene in which Scott is presented as a feeble reed and Hemingway as a pseudo-*macho* boor maliciously humiliating his palsied adversary—in good part out of literary competitiveness. The scene was a scar on the play's otherwise all too transparent surface.

José Quintero directed the script handsomely—abetted by Oliver Smith's discreetly evocative scenic design—and all the other effects (lighting, costumes, etc.) caught the eye. But there was too little heart at the center. Only Geraldine Page, whose voice and manner impart to Zelda a touching feline melancholy, achieved considerable variety by her feeling for the rhythm of living speech. Her physical grace at unexpected moments of seeming dishevelment kept the play breathing with truth despite the monotonous texture of verbal depiction. Particularly striking in Page's bedroom scene with her French lover was the avidity of her desire for a fulfillment beyond the mere exercise of sexual consummation. □

MANOXYLOUS

manoxylous (Greek): a canoe or boat made from one piece of timber; formed or made out of a single piece of wood

From one piece of wood—
trunk, branch, tendril, even root—
it is possible to build again an entirety:
hull, stern-post, futtock, crutch, and transom,
a confluence of small things in search
of speed, direction, a meagre omnipotence
against wind, water, reckless destiny.

It is all in the shape: curvature, angle,
or singleminded horizontality meeting as though
ordained to be divided and resurrected. Kinesthetic,
like knee, joint, tendon, muscle, and infinite nerve endings.

The eye knows: It senses in the object itself,
completion. Man is a cruel joke here.
For the tree, like the boat, is a passage
for wind, the leaves a gathering of jib and mizzen
with a common purpose.

Yet the tree does not contest: It senses
in its reordering a decline and growth. Location
is not its purpose, but unity,
the bend of the body to its destiny,
in still wind or turbulence.
The gaze of anyone who builds would find a constancy
in this form, malleable, divine in its permutations.

It is what I'd have you see
when you surround me, fasten your purpose
to my shape, take me apart,
limb by limb:
manoxylous, the wood of my heart.

Michael Blumenthal

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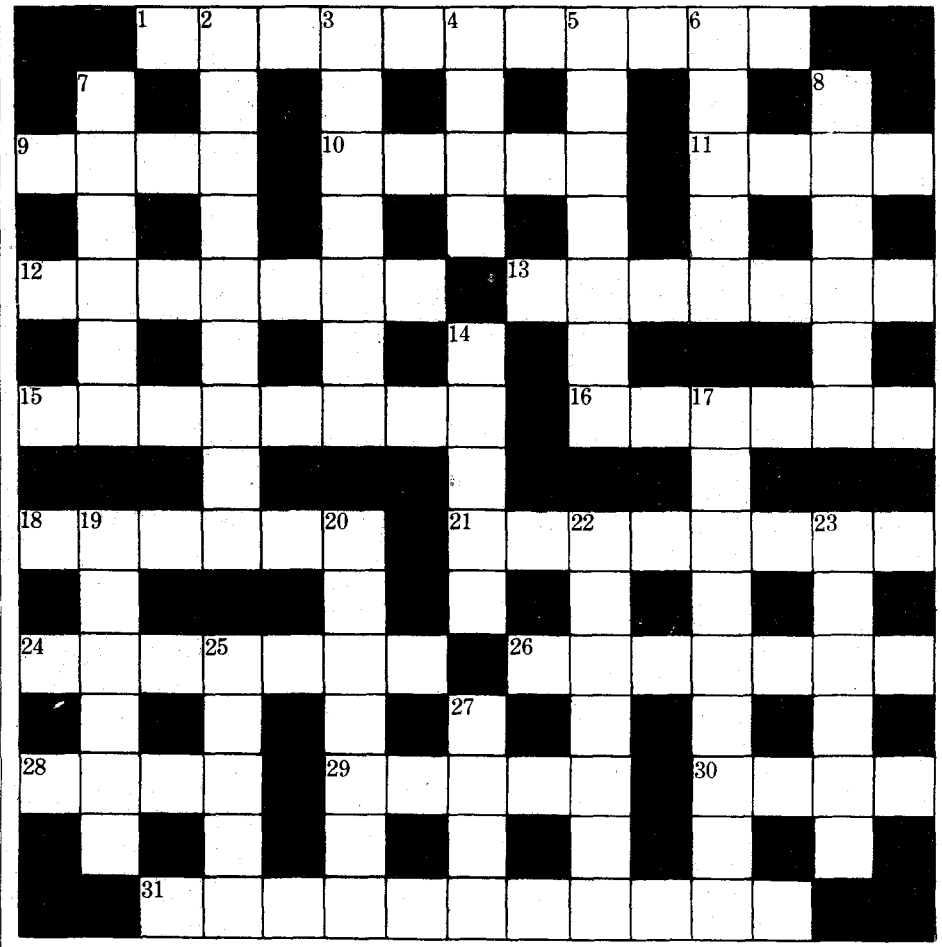
Crossword Puzzle No. 1817

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 See 7 down
9 and 10 What the doctor gives, if measles is suspected? (Waiting creditors are quite happy to do so.) (4,5)
11 and 23 down Do they chart car production? Only writers can make them. (10)
12 Bismarck might be associated with blood before this sort of dog. (7)
13 If so, there's nothing in it, although in the attempt I edged closer. (7)
15 Such as The Babe, commonly. (8)
16 One of these may go up to the capital, but they go down in mine. (6)
18 With a vista, you can see part of it incandesce nicely. (6)
21 When the listener calls, the ranger is made to depend on such as listeners. (8)
24 Good-natured way of questioning one's own aptitude? (7)
26 Did Sheridan suggest we study it? (7)
28 You have to admit this traveler is game! (4)
29 Badly-aimed attacks from it, according to a certain president. (5)
30 Back-talk? It's resounding! (4)
31 A decathlon champion should be so good, anyway! (2,3,6)

DOWN

2 and 19 A couple of prime numbers have this, as sometimes very different folk have. (7,2,6)
3 Shut up, and lo! you'll find it in scene-shifting. (7)
4 One might be with knots in a series of rows. (4)
5 Some ski, perhaps, but some of them still have sleds. (7)
6 Unsuitable for stirring paint? (5)
7 and 1 Back number, perhaps. (A certain lack of feeling is associated with it.) (6,11)
8 It might be the way we drive. (6)
14 Quaker, possibly, like Penn, with the final point being lost. (5)
17 One might take one's 11 in for it—lamenting the possible outcome. (9)
19 See 2 down
20 Mercurous chloride? Look in a caravan component for it. (7)
22 A fancy word for publicity concerning the sort of beast mentioned in 20. (7)
23 See 11 across
25 One might come this way in sailing, almost. (5)
27 The advantage of being on the border? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1816

ACROSS: 1 Open and shut case; 9 Face facts; 10 Agree; 11 Celery; 12 On record; 14 Gunsmith; 16 Inked; 17 Rodeo; 18 Apricots; 20 Marks out; 21 Agnate; 24 A-bomb; 25 Infringes; 26 The Beggars Opera. DOWN: 1 Office; 2 Excel; 3 As far as possible; 4 Duct; 5 His and Hers; 6 Travel incognito; 7 Air-pocket; 8 Emended; 13 Disabusing; 15 Underdone; 17 Rampart; 19 Persia; 22 Argue; 23 Afar.

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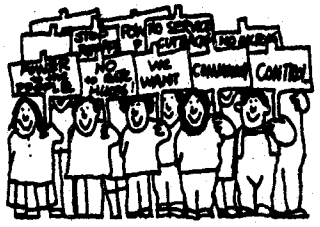

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